The ART of CONTENTMENT.

By the Author of the WHOLE DUTY of MAN, &c.

The third Impression.

It is but loſt labor, that ye haſten to riſe up early, and ſo late take reſt, and eat the bread of carefulneſs: for ſo he giveth his beloved ſleep, Pſalm 127. 3.

B. 7. 3

GLASGOW,
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THE PREFACE

THE *desire of happiness is so coessential with our nature, so interwoven and incorporate with it; that nothing but the dissolution of the whole frame can extinguish it. This runs through the whole race of mankind, and amidst the infinite variety of other inclinations, preserves it self entire. The most various contradictory tempers do yet conspire in this, and men of the most unequal fortunes, are yet equal in their wishes of being happy.*

But this concurrence as to the end is not more universal then the disagreement about the way. Every man would have happiness, but wherein that consists, or how it is to be attained, has been diversly opin'd. Indeed the ultimate supreme happiness as it is originally inherent in God, so it is wrapt up in those clouds and darkness, which, as the Psalmist says, are round about him, Psalm 18. 11. *And we can see nothing of it but in those gleams and rays he is pleased to dart out upon us; so that all our estimates as to our final*

final felicity, must be measured by those revelations he has made of it.

But one would think our temporal happiness were as much a mystery as our eternal, to see what variety of blind pursuits are made after it. One man thinks 't is seated on the top pinacle of honour, and climbs till perhaps he falls headlong. Another thinks it a mineral, that must be dig'd out of the earth, and toils to lade himself with thick clay, Hab. 2. 6. and at last finds a grave, where he sought his treasure. A third supposes it consists in the variety of pleasures, and wearies himself in that pursuit. Which only cloies, and disappoints. Yet every one of these can read you lectures of the gross mistake and folly of the other, whilst himself is equally deluded.

Thus do men chase an imaginary good, till they meet with real evils; herein exposing themselves to the same cheat Laban put upon Jacob, that serve for Rachel, and are rewarded with Leah, court fancied beauty, and marry loathed deformity. Such delusive felicities as these are the largesses of the Prince of the Air, who once attempted to have enveigled even Christ himself, Matth. 4.

But Gods proposals are more sincere: he knows how sandy, how false a foundation all the external things must make, and therefore warns us not to build so much as our present satisfaction upon them, but shews us a more certain, a more

compendious way to acquire what we grasp after, by telling us that as Godliness in respect of the next, so contentment for this world is great gain, 1 Tim. 6.6. It is indeed the unum necessarium, the one point in which all the lines of worldly happiness are concentred, and to complete its excellence, 'tis to be had at home: nay, indeed only there. We need not ramble in wild pursuits after it, we may form it within our own breasts: no man wants materials for it, that knows but how to put them together.

And the directing to that skill is the only design of the ensuing Tract, which coming upon so kind an errand, may at least hope for an unprejudiced reception. Contentment is a thing we all profess to aspire to; and therefore it cannot be thought an unfriendly office to endeavour to conduct men to it. How far the ensuing considerations may tend to that end, I must leave to the judgement, and experience of the Reader, only desiring him that he will weigh them with that seriousness which befits a thing wherein both his happiness and duty are concern'd: for in this (as in many other instances) God has so twisted them together, that we cannot be innocently miserable. The present infelicities of our murmures and impatiencies, have an appendant guilt, which will consign us to a more irreversible state of dissatisfaction hereafter.

THE ART OF CONTENTMENT.

SECT. I.

Of the necessary connexion between Happiness and Contentment.

GOD who is essentially happy in himself, can receive no accession to his felicity by the poor contributions of men. He cannot therefore be supposed to have made them upon intuition of increasing, but communicating his happiness. And this his original design is very visible in all the parts of his œconomy towards them. When lapsed man had counterplotted against himself, defeated the purpose of the Divine goodness, and plunged his whole nature into the opposite state of endless misery; he yet reinforced his first design, and an expedient as

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full of wonder as mercy, the death of his Son, recovers him to his former capacity of bliss. And that it might not only be a bare capacity he has added all other methods proper to work upon a rational creature. He has shewed him his danger, set before him in perspective that eternal Tophet, which he is advised to shun. On the other side, he has no less lively described the heavenly Jerusalem, the Celestial country to which he is to aspire: nay, farther has levelled his road to it leads him not as he did the Israelites through the wilderness, through intricate mazes, to puzzle his understanding; through *a land of drought, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions*, Deut. 8. 15. to discourage and affright him: but has in the Gospel chalkt out a plain, a safe, nay a pleasant path; as much superior both in the ease of the way, and in the end to which it leads, as Heaven is to Canaan.

2. By doing this he has not onely secured our grand and ultimate happiness, but provided for our intermedial also. Those Christian duties which are to carry us to heaven, are our refreshments, our viaticum in our journey: his yoke is not to gall and fret us, but an engine by which we may with ease (and almost insensibly) draw all the clogs and incumbrances of humane life. For whether we take Christianity in its whole complex, or in its several and distinct branches, 'tis certainly the most excel-

excellent, the most compendious art of happy living: its very tasks are rewards, and its precepts are nothing but a divine sort of Alchymy, to sublime at once our nature and our pleasures.

3. This may be evidenced in every particular of the Evangelical law: but having formerly made some attempt towards it in another * Tract, I shall not here re-assume the whole subject. I shall only single out one particular precept, wherein happiness is not (as in the others) only implyed, and must be catcht at the rebound by consequence and event; but is literally expresst, and is the very matter of the duty; I mean the precept of acquiescence and *Contentment*, Happiness and this true genuine Contentment, being terms so convertible, that to bid us be content, is but another phrase for bidding us be happy.

* *Decay of Christian Piety.*

4. Temporal enjoyments, such as are pleasure, wealth, honor, and the rest, though they make specious pretences to be the measure of humane happiness, are all of them justly discarded by the Philosopher in his Ethiks, upon this one consideration, that coming from abroad they may be with-held or taken from us: and our tenure being precarious, we even for that reason are unhappy in our most desirable possessions, because we are still lyable to be so. And therefore he concludes, that felicity

city must be placed in the mind & soul, which stands without the reach of fortune; and in the practise of vertue, which in its own nature, and not in its contingent use is truly good, and therefore certainly renders the possessors such

5. But this practise being diffused through the whole extent of Moral duty, *Epictetus* thought he had deserved well of humane nature, when he drew it up in two short words, to *sustain* and *abstain*: that is to bear with constancy adverse events, and with moderation enjoy those that are prosperous. Which complexure of Philosophy is yet more fully, as well as more compendiously expresst in the single notion of *Contentment*, which involves the patient bearing of all misadventures, and generous contempt of sensual illectives. This state of mind the Greeks express by calling it αὐτάρκεια or self-sufficiency, which we know properly speaking, is one of the incommunicable attributes of the divine nature; and the Stoiks expressly pretend, that by it mortal men are enabled to rival their Gods: in *Seneca's* phrase, to make a controversie with *Jupiter* himself. But abating the insolent blasphemy of an independent felicity, Christianity acknowledges a material truth in the assertion: and St. *Paul* declares of himself, that having *learnt how to want, and how to abound, and in whatever state he happens to be in, therewith to be content: he is able to do all things through Christ*

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that strengthens him, Phil. 4. 11, 12, 13. *and having nothing, to possess all things*, 2 Cor. 6. 10.

6. Which great event comes about, not only because all good things are eminently in the divine nature, and he who by Vertue and Religion possesses Him, thereby in a full equivalence has every thing; but also upon humane measures, and the principles of Philosophy: the compendious address to wealth, as *Plato* rightly observed, being not to encrease possessions, but lessen desires. And if so, 't will follow that the contented man must be abundantly provided for, being so entirely satisfied with what he has, as to have no desires at all. Indeed, it is truly said of covetous men, and is equally verified of all who have any desire to gratifie, that they want no less what they have, then what they have not: but the reverse of that paradox is really made good by *Contentment*, which bestows on men the enjoyment of whatever they have, and also whatever they have not; and by teaching to want nothing, abundantly secures not to want happiness.

7. On the other side, this one grace being absent, it is not in the power of any success or affluence to make life a tolerable thing. Let all the materials of earthly happiness be amast together, and flung upon one man, they will without contentment be but like the fatal prize of *Tarpeia*'s treason, who was prest to

death with the weight of her booty. He that has the elements of felicity, and yet cannot form them into a satisfaction, is more desperately miserable then he that wants them: for he who wants them has yet something to hope for, and thinks if he had them he might be happy; but he who insignificantly possesses them, has no reserve, has not so much as the Flattery of an expectation: for he has nothing left to desire, and yet can be as little said to enjoy.

8. He therefore that would have the extract, the quintessence of happiness, must seek it in Content. All outward accessions are but the dross and earthly part; this alone is the spirit, which when tis once separated, depends not upon the fate of the other; but preserves its vigor when that is destroyed. St. *Paul*, whom I before mentioned, is a ready instance of it, who professes to be *content in whatever state*, Contentment being not so inseparately linked to external things, but that they may subsist apart. That those are often without it we are too sure, and that it may be without them is as certainly true; though by our own default we have not so many examples of it. A heart that rightly computes the difference between temporals and eternals, may resolve with the Prophet. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shal fruit be on the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fruit shall yield*

field no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herds in the stall; yet I will rejoyce in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation, Hab. 3. 17, 18. He that has God, needs not much deplore the want of any thing else: nor can he that considers the plenty and glory of his future state, be much dejected with the want or the abjectness of his present.

9. Yet so indulgent is God to our infirmities, that knowing how unapt our impatient natures are to *walk only by faith, and not at all by sight*, 2 Cor. 5. 7. he is pleased to give us fair antepasts of satisfaction here, dispenses his temporal blessings, though not equally, yet so universally, that he that has least, has enough to oblige not only his acquiescence, but his thankfulness. Though every man has not all he wishes, yet he has that which is more valuable then that he complains to want; nay, which he himself could worse spare, were it put to his option.

10. And now from such a disposure of things, who would not expect that mankind should be the cheerfullest part of the creation: that the *Sun should* not more *rejoyce to run his course*, Psalm 19. 5. then man should to finish his: that a journey which has so blessed an end, and such good accommodation by the way, should be past with all imaginable alacrity, and that we should live here practisers

and learners of that state of unmixed interminable joyes to which we aspire. But alace! if we look upon the universality of men, we shall find it nothing so: but while all other creatures gladsomly follow the order of their creation, take pleasure in those things God has assigned for them, we with a sullen perverseness quarrel at what we should enjoy, and in every thing make it our business, not to fit it for our use, but to find out some concealed quality which may render it unfit. We look insidiously upon our blessings, like men that designed only to pick a quarrel, and start a pretence for mutining. From hence it is that man who was design'd the Lord of the world, to whose satisfactions all inferior beings were to contribute, is now the unhappiest of the creatures: nay, if the whole order of the universe were inverted, he becomes slave to his own vassals, courts all these little sublunary things with such passion, that if they prove coy and fly his embraces, he is mad and desperate: if they fling themselves into his Arms, he is then glutted and satiated, like *Amnon he hates more then he loved*, 2 Sam. 13. 15. and is sicker of his possession, then he was of his desire.

11. And thus will it ever be till we can keep our desires more at home, and not suffer them to ramble after things without our reach. That honest Roman, who from his extra-

traordinary industry upon his little spot of ground received such an increase, as brought him under suspicion of witchcraft, is a good example for us. God has placed none of us in so barren a soil, in so forlorn a state, but there is something in it which may afford us comfort; let us husband that to the utmost, and tis scarce imaginable what improvements even he that appears the most miserable may make of his condition. But if in a sullen humor we will not cultivate our own field, because we have perhaps more mind to our neighbors, we may thank our selves if we starve. The despising of what God has already given us, is sure but a cold invitation to farther bounty. Men are indeed forced sometimes to reward the mutinous: but God is not to be so attaqued, nor is it that sort of violence which can ever force heaven. The Heathen could say that *Jupiter* sent his plagues among the poorer sort of men, because they were alwayes repining: and indeed there is so much of truth in the observation, that our impatience and discontent at our present condition, is the greatest provocation to God to make it worse.

12. It must therefore be resolved to be very contrary to our interest, and surely tis no less to our duty. It is so if we do but own our selves men, for in that is implyed a subordination and submission to that power that made

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us so; and to dispute his managery of the World, to make other distributions of it then he has done, is to renounce our subjection, and set up for dominion. But this is yet more intolerable as we are Christians, it being a special part of the Evangelical discipline, cheerfully to conform to any condition: to *know how to be abased, and how to abound, to be full and to be hungry*, Phil. 4. 12. *to be careful for nothing*, vers. 6. Nay, so little do's Christ give countenance to our peevish discontents, our wanton out-cryes, when we are not hurt, that he requires more then a contentment, an exultancy and transport of joy, even under the heaviest pressures, under reproaches and persecutions. *Rejoyce ye in that day, and leap for joy*, Luk. 6. 23. And sure nothing can be more contrary to this, then to be alwayes whining and complaining, crying in the Prophets phrase, *my leanness, my leanness, wo is me.* Isai. 24 19. when perhaps *Moses's* simile do's better fit our state, *Jesurun waxed fat and kicked.* Deut. 32. 15.

13. And as this querulous humor is against our interest and duty, so it is visibly against our ease. 'T is a sickness of the mind, a perpetual gnawing and craving of the appetite without any possibility of satisfaction: and indeed is the same in the heart which the *Canimus appetitus* is in the stomach; to which we may aptly enough apply that description we find

find in the Prophet, *he shal snatch on the right hand and be hungry, and he shall eat on the left, and not be satisfied,* Esa. 9. 20. Where this sharp, this fretting humor abounds, nothing converts into nourishment: every new accession do's but excite some new desire; and as tis observed of a trencher-fed dog, that he tasts not one bit for the greedy expectation of the next, so a discontented mind is so intent upon his pursuits, that he has no relish of his acquests. So that what the Prophet speaks of the Covetous, is equally applyable to all other sorts of Male-contents: *he enlarges his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied.* Hab. 2. 5. And sure if the *desire accomplished* be, as *Solomon* says, *sweet to the soul*, Prov. 13. 19. it must be exceedingly bitter, to be thus condemned to endless unaccomplishable desires: and yet this is the torture which every repining uncontented spirit provides for its self.

14. What a madness is it then for men to be so desperately bent against their interest and duty, as to renounce even their ease too for company? One would think this age were sensual enough to be at defiance with the least shadow of uneasiness. It is so, I am sure, where it ought not: every thing is laborious when tis in compliance with their duty: a few minutes spent in prayer, *Oh what a weariness is it!* Mal. 2. 19. If they chance but to miss a meal, they are ready to cry out, their *knees are weak*

weak through fasting, Psalm 109. 23. yet they can without regret, or any self-compassion, macerate and cruciate themselves with anxious cares and vexations, and as the Apostle speaks, 1 Tim. 6. 10. *pierce themselves through with many sorrows*. That proposal therefore which was very rashly made by St. *Peter* to our Saviour, *Master pity thy self*, Matth. 16. 22. which we render *be it far from thee*, would here be an advised motion to the generality of mankind, who are commonly made unhappy not by any thing without them, but by those restless impatiencies that are within them.

15. It may therefore be a seasonable office to endeavour the appeasing these storms, by recalling them to those sober rational considerations, which may shew as well the folly, as uneasiness of this repining unsatisfiable humour. Tis certain, that in true reasoning, we can find nothing whereon to found it, but a great deal to enforce the contrary. Indeed, tis so much against the dictate of reasonable nature to affect dammage, sin, and torment, that were there nothing else to be said but what I have already mentioned, it might competently discover the great unreasonableness of this sin.

16. But we need not confine our appeal to reason, as it is only a judge of utility and advantage; but enlarge it to another notion, as it is

is judge of equity and right: in which respect also it gives as cleer and peremptory a sentence against all murmuring and impatience. To evince this I shall insist upon these particulars. 1. That God is debtor to no man, and therefore what ever he affords to any, it is upon bounty, not of right, a benevolence, not a due. 2. That this bounty is not streight or narrow, confined to some few particular persons, and wholly overskipping the rest, but more or less universally diffused to all. So that he who has the least, cannot justly say but he has been liberally dealt with. 3. That if we compare our blessings with our allayes, our good things with our evil, we shall find our good far surmounting. 4. That we shall find them yet more so, if we compare them with the good we have done, as on the contrary we shall find our afflictions scarce discernible, if balanced with our sins. 5. That as God is the Rector of the universe, so it appertains to him to make such allotments, such distributions, as may best preserve the state of the whole. 6. That God notwithstanding that universal care, has also a peculiar aspect on every particular Person, and disposes to him what he discerns best for him in special. 7. If we compare our adversities, with those of other men, we shall alwayes find something that equals, if not exceeds our own. All these are certain irrefragable truths, and there is none

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of them single but may, if well prest upon the mind, charm it into a calmness and resignation; but when there is such a conspiration of arguments, it must be a very obstinate perverseness that can resist them: or should they fail to enforce a full conviction; will yet introduce those subsidiary proofs, which I have to alledge, so advantagiously, as will, being put all together, amount unto perfect and uncontroulable Evidence.

SECT. II.

Of Gods Absolute Soveraignty.

1. THE first proposition, that God is debtor to no man, is too clear and apparent to require much of illustration: for as he is a free agent and may act as he pleases, so he is the sole proprietary, and can wrongfully detain from none, because all original right is in himself. This has been so much acknowledged by the blindest Heathens, that none of them durst make insolent addresses to their Gods, challenge any thing of them as of debt, but by sacrifices and prayers owned their dependence and wants, and implored supplies. And sure Christianity teaches us not to be more sawcy. If those Deities who owed their very being to their votaries, were yet acknowledged to be the spring and source of all, we can

can with no pretence deny it to that supreme power in *whom we live, and move, and have our being*, Acts 17. 28. For if it were meerly an act of his choice to give us a being, all his subsequent bounties can have no other original then his own good pleasure. We could put no obligation upon God before we were: and when we began to be, we were his creatures, and so by the most indisputable right we owe our selves to him, but can have no antecedent title on which to claime any thing from him: so that the Apostle might well make the challenge which he doth on Gods behalf, *who hath given any thing unto him, and it shall be recompenced unto him again?* Rom. 11. 25.

2. Now ordinary discretion teaches us not to be too bold in our expectations from one to whom we can plead no right. It has as little of prudence as of modesty, to press impudently upon the bounty of a Patron, and do's but give him temptation (at least pretence) to deny. And if it be thus with men, who possibly may sometimes have an interest, sometimes a vanity, to oblige us; it must much more be so towards God, who cannot be in want of us, and therefore need not buy us; *our good*, as the Psalmist speaks, *extends not to him*, Psal. 16. 2. He has a fundamental right in that little we are, which will stand good though it should never be corroborated by

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greater benefits. With what an humble bas fulneſs should vve then ſue for any thing vvho have no argument ro invite the leaſt d nation? being already ſo preingaged, th vve cannot mortgage ſo much as our ſelves conſideration of any new favour: and ſure extravagant hopes do very ill befit people this condition. We ſee the modeſty of goo *Mephibosheth*, who though he vvas by a ſla derous accuſation outed of half the eſtate *David* had given him, yet upon a reflexion th he derived it all from his good pleaſure, diſp ted not the ſentence, but cheerfully reſigne the vvhole to the ſame diſpoſure, from whic he received it, ſaying, *yea, let him take all* 2 Sam. 19. 30. A rare example and fit for imi tation, as being adapted to the preſent caſe, not only in that one circumſtance of his having received all from the King, but alſo in that o the attainder of his blood, which he confeſſe in the former part of the verſe, for *all my fathers houſe were but dead men before my Lord*. And alace, may we not ſay the very ſame? was not our whole race tainted in our firſt Parents? So that if God had not the primary title of vaſſallage, he vvould in our fall have acquired that of confiſcation and eſcheat. And can we think our ſelves then in terms to capitulate and make our own conditions, and expect God ſhould humour us in all our wild demands?

3. This

3. This is indeed to keep up that old rebellion of our Progenitor, for that consisted in a discontent with that portion God had assigned him, and coveting what he had restrained him. Nay, indeed it comes up to the height of the devils proposal, the attempting *to be as God*, Genes. 3. 5. For tis an endeavour to wrest the managery out of his hands, to supersede his Authority of dispensing to us, and to carve for our selves. This is so mad an insolence, that were it possible to state a case exactly parallel between man and man, it would raise the indignation of any that but pretended to ingenuity. Yet this is, without Hyperbole, the true meaning of every murmuring repining thought we entertain.

4. But as bad as it is, who is there of us, that can in this particular say, *we have made our heart clean*? Prov. 20. 9. Tis true, we make some formal acknowledgment sometimes that we receive all from Gods gift, custome teaches us from our infancy after every meal we eat, to give him thanks (though even that is now thought too much respect, and begins to be discarded as unfashionable.) Yet sure he cannot be thought to do that in earnest, that has all the time of his eating been grumbling, that his table abounds not with such delicacies as his neighbours. And yet at this rate God knows are most of our thanks-

thanksgivings. Indeed we have not so much ordinary civility to God, as we have to men. The common proverb teaches us, not too curiously to pry into the blemishes of what is given us: but on Gods gifts we sit as Censors, nicely examine every thing thing which is any way disagreeable to our fancies, and as if we dealt with him under the notion of chapmen, disparage it, as *Solomon* says, buyers use to do, *it is nought, it is nought, saith the buyer*, Prov. 20. 14. Nay, we seem yet more absurdly to change the scene, and as if God were to make oblations to us, we as critically observe the defects of his benefactions, as the Levitical Priests were to do those of the sacrifice, and (like angry Deities) scornfully reject, whatever does not perfectly answer our wanton appetites.

5. And now should God take us at our words, withdraw all those blessings which we so fastidiously despise, what a condition were we in? Tis sure we have nothing to plead in reverse of that judgement. There is nothing in it against justice: for he takes but his own. This he intimates to Israel, Hos. 2. 9. I will *return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wooll and my flax*: in which he asserts his own propriety, my corn, my wine, &c. & recalls them to the remembrance that they were but usufructuaries: and tis as evident that

that our tenure is but the same. Nay, this proceeding would not be repugnant even to mercy, for even that is not obliged still to prostitute it self to our content. I am sure such a tolerance is beyond all the measures of humane lenity. Should any of us offer an alms to an indigent wretch, and he when he sees tis Silver, should murmur and exclaime that it is not Gold, would we not draw back our hand, and reserve our charity for a more worthy object? Tis true indeed, Gods thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor our narrow bowels equal measures for the divine compassions, and we experimentally find that his long-suffering infinitely exceeds ours, yet we know he do's in the parable of the Lord and the servant, *Mat.* 18. declare that he will proportion his mercy by ours in that instance; and we have no promise that he will not do it in this: nay, we have all reason to expect that he should; for since his wisdome promts him to do nothing in vain, and all his bounty to us is designed to make us happy, when he sees that end utterly frustrated by our discontents, to what purpose should he continue that to us which we will be never the better for?

6. Besides though he be exceedingly patient, yet he is not negligent or insensible, he takes particular notice, not only with what diligence we employ, but with what affections we resent every of his blessings. And as in-

gratitude is a vice odious to men, so it is extremely provoking to God: so that in this sense also, the words of our Savior are most true, from *him that hath not* (i. e.) that hath not a grateful sense and value, *shall be taken away even that he hath.* Matth. 25. 29. But we may find a threatning of this kind yet more express to *Israel*, *because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with gladness and with joyfulness of heart for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, whom the Lord God will send among thee, in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things,* Deut. 28 47, 48. a sad and dismal inversion, yet founded wholly in the want of that cheerful recognition which God expected from them. And if *Israel* the lot of his own inheritance, that people whom he had singled out from all the nations of the world, could thus forfeit his favour by unthankfulness, sure none of us can suppose we have any surer entail of it. In a word, as God loves a cheerful giver, so he also loves a cheerful receiver. One that complies with his end in bestowing, by taking a just complacence in his gifts. But the querulous & unsatisfied, reproach his bounty: accuse him of illiberality and narrowness of mind. So that he seems even in his honour engaged to bring them to a righter apprehension of him, and by a deprivation, teach them the value of those good things, which they could not learn by the enjoyment.

7. If

7. If therefore ingenuity and gratitude cannot, yet at least let prudence and self-love engage us against this sin of *Murmuring*, which we see do's abundantly justifie the Character the Wise man gives when he tells us *'t is unprofitable*, Wis. 1. 11. he might have said pernicious also, for so it evidently is in its effects. Let us then arm our selves against it, and to that purpose impress deeply upon our minds the present consideration, that God owes us nothing, and that whatever we receive is an alms, and not a tribute. *Diogenes* being asked what wine drank the most pleasant; answered, that which is drunk at anothers cost. And this circumstance we can never miss of to recommend our good things to us: for be they little or much, they come *gratis*. When therefore in a pettish mood we find our selves apt to charge God foolishly, and to think him strait-handed towards us, let us imagine we hear God expostulating with us, as the housholder in the parable, *Friend I do thee no wrong: is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* Mat. 20 15. If God have not the right of disposing, let us find out those that have, and see how much better we shall speed: but if he hath, let us take heed of disputing with him. We that subsist meerly by his favour, had need court and cherish it by all the arts of humble observance. Every man is ready to say how ill beggary

and pride do agree. The first qualification we cannot put off; O let us not provide it of the other so inconvenient, so odious an adjunct. Let us leave off prescribing to God (which no ingenuous man would do to an earthly benefactor) and let us betake our selves to a more holy and successful policy, the acknowledgement of past mercies, and our own unworthiness. This was *Jacob's* method, *I am not worthy of the least of all he mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands*, and with this humble preface he introduces his petition for rescue in his present distress, *Deliver me I pray thee from the hand of my brother*, &c. Gen. 32. 10, 11. An excellent patern of Divine Rhetorick, which the success demonstrates to have been very prevalent. And we cannot transcribe a better Copy, to render our desires as successfull. Indeed, we are so utterly destitute of all arguments from our selves, that we can make no reasonable form of address, if we found it not in somthing of God: and there is nothing even in him adapted to our purpose, but his mercy, nor can that be so advantageously urged by any thing, as by the former instances it has given of it self, for as God only is fit to be a precedent to himself, so he loves to be so. Thus we find, not only *Moses*, but God often recollecting his miraculous favours towards *Israel*,

Israel, as an argument to do more: let us therefore accost him in his own way, and by a frequent and grateful recounting of his former mercies, engage him to future. Nor need we be at a loss for matter of such recollection, if we will but seriously consider what we have already received, which is the subject of the next Section.

SECT. III.

Of God Unlimited Bounty.

1. IT is the known character of an unworthy nature, to write injuries in Marble, and benefits in dust: and however some (as *Seneca* well observes) may acquit themselves of this imputation as to man, yet scarce any do so in relation to God. Tis true indeed, the charge must be a little varied; for God neither will nor can do us injury: yet we receive any thing that is adverse with such a resentment as if it were, and engrave that in our memories with indelible characters, whilst his great and real benefits are either not at all observed, or with so transient an advertence, that the comparison of dust is beyond our pitch, and we may more properly be said to write them in water. Nay, so far are we from keeping records and registers of his favours, that even those standing and fixt ones which sense can

prompt us to (without the aid of our memories) cannot obtain our notice.

2. Were it not thus, it were impossible for men to be so perpetually in the complaining Key, as if their voyces were capable of no other sound. One wants this, and another that, and a third something beyond them both, and so on *ad infinitum*; when all this while every one of them enjoyes a multitude of good things without any remark. That very breath wherewith they utter their complaints, is a blessing and a fundamental one too: for if God should withdraw that, they were incapable of whatsoever else they either have, or desire. 'T is true that some mens impatiencies have risen so high, as to cast away life, because it was not cloathed with all circumstances they wisht. Yet these are rare instances, and do only shew such mens depraved judgement of things. A rich Jewel is not the less valuable, because a mad man in his raving fit flings it into the fire: but as to the generality of men, the Devil (though a lyar) gave a true account of their sense, when he said, *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life.* Job 2. 4. And though perhaps in an angry fit many men have with *Jonas*, chap. 4. 3. *wisht to dye*, yet ten to one should death then come, they would be as willing to divert it, as was the man in the Apologue, who wearied with his burden of sticks, flung it down and called

called for death, but when he came, owned no other occasion for him, but to be helpt up again with his bundle. I dare in this appeal to the experience of those, who have seemed very weary of life, whether when any suddain danger has surprised them, it has not as suddainly altered their mind, and made them more desire life, then before they abhor'd it. 'T is the common saying, As long as there is life there is hope: there is so as to secular concerns, for what strange revolutions do we often see in the age of a man? from what despicable beginnings have many arrived to the most splendid conditions? of which we have divers modern as well as ancient instances. And indeed 't is admirable to see what time and industry will (with Gods blessing) effect. *But there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, Eccl.*9.10. we can improve no more when we are once transplanted thither.

3. But this is yet much more considerable in respect of our spiritual state. Our life is *the day wherein we are to work*, Joh.9.4. (yea, to work out our salvation:) but *when the night comes* (when death overtakes) *no man cã work.* Now alace, when 't is considered how much of this day the most of us have loiter'd away, how many of us have stood idle till the sixt or ninth hour, it will be our concern not to have our day close before the eleventh. Nay, alace, 't is yet worse with us: we have not only been idle,

but very often ill busied; so that we have a great part of our time to unravel, and that is not to be done in a moment. For though our works may fitly enough be represented by the Prophets, comparison of *a spiders web*, Isai. 59. 5. yet they want the best property even of that: they cannot be so soon undone. Vices that are radicated by time and custome, lie too deep to be lightly swept away. Tis no easy thing to perswade our selves to the will of parting with them. Many violences we must offer to our selves, a long and strict course of mortification must be gone through, ere we can find in our hearts to bid them be gone: and yet when we do so, they are not so tractable as the Centurions servants. They will indeed come whenever we bid them, but they will scarce go so: they must be expelled by force and by slow degrees; we must fight for every inch of ground we gain from them: and as God would not assist the *Israelites* to subdue the *Canaanites* at once, Deut. 7. 22. so neither ordinarily do's he us to master perfectly our corruption. Now a process of this difficulty is not to be dispatcht on a sudden. And yet this is not all our task, for we have not only ill habits to extirpate, but we have also good ones to acquire: tis not a mere negative vertue will serve our turns, nor will empty lamps enter us into the marriage chamber, Matth. 25. 10. *We must add to our faith vertue, and*

and to vertue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, &c. 2 Petr. 1. 5. No link must be wanting of that sacred chain, but we must (as the same Apostle advises) *be holy in all manner of conversation*, 1 Pet. 1. 15.

4. And now I would desire the Reader seriously to consider, whether he can upon good grounds tell himself that this so difficult (and yet so necessary) a work is effectually wrought in him. If it be, he is a happy man, and can with no pretence complain of any external want: (he that is fed with *Manna*, must be strangely perverse if he murmure for a belly-full *of leeks and onions*, Num. 11. 5.) But on the contrary, he owes infinite thanks to God, that has spared him time for this important business, and did not put a period to his natural life, before he had begun a spiritual. For I fear there are among the best of us, few of so entire an innocence; but they may remember some, either habits or acts of sin, in which it would have been dreadful for them to have been snatcht away. And then how comprehensive, how prolifick a mercy has life been to them, when it has carried eternity in its womb, and their continuance on earth has qualified them for heaven? Neither are such persons only to look on it as a blessing in the retrospect, as it relates to the past, but also in the present and future: which if they continue to employ well, does not only confirm,

but advance their reward. Besides, God may please by them to glorifie himself, make them instrumental to his service; which as it is the greatest honor, so it is also the greatest satisfaction to a good heart. He shews himself too mercenary that so longs for his reward, as to grow impatient of his attendances: he that loves God, thinks himself blest in the opportunity of doing work, as well as in receiving wages. Thus we see how life is under all these aspects a mercy to a pious man, and such as not only obliges him to contentment, but gratitude.

5. But supposing a man cannot give this comfortable account of his life; but is conscious that he has spent it to a very different purpose, yet do's not that at all lessen his obligations to God, who meant he should have employed it better, and that he has not done so, is meerly his own fault. Nay, indeed the worse his state is, the greater mercy it is, that God has not yet made it irreversible, that he has not cut him off at once from the earth and the possibility of heaven too, but affords him yet a longer *day, if yet he will hear his voyce*, Psal. 95. 7. This long-suffering is one of the most transcendent acts of divine goodness, and therefore the Apostle rightly stiles it *the riches of his goodne's and long-suffering and forbearance*, Rom. 2. 4. & so at last we commonly acknowledge it, when we have worn it out, and can no longer

longer receive advantage by it. What a value do's a gasping despairing soul put upon a smal parcel of that time, which before he knew not how fast enough to squander? Oh, that men would set the same estimate on it before, and then certainly, as it would make them better husbands of it, so it would also render them more thankful for it, *Accounting that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation*, 2 Pet. 3. 15.

6. Indeed did men but rightly compute the benefit of life upon this score, all secular encumbrances and uneasinesses of it would be overwhelmed, and stand only as Cyphers in the account. What a shame is it then that we should spend our breath in sighs & out-cryes? which if we would employ to those nobler ends for which 't was given, would supersede our complaints, and make us confess we were well dealt with, that *our life* (though bare and stript of all outward accessaries) *is given us for a prey*, Jer. 45. 5. And indeed he that has yet the great work of life to do, can very ill spare time or sorrow to bestow upon the regretting any temporal distress, since his whole stock is little enough to bewail and repair his neglects of his eternal concerns. Were all our lives therefore destitute of all outward comfort; nay, were they nothing but a scene of perpetual disasters, yet this one advantage of life would infinitely outweigh them all, and render our murmurings very inexcusable.

7. But God has not put this to the utmost tryal, has never placed any man in such a state of unmixt calamity, but that he still affords many and great allayes: he finds it fit sometimes to defalk some of our outward comfort, and perhaps imbitter others, but he never takes all away. This must be acknowledged, if we do but consider how many things there are in which the whole race of mankind do in common partake. The four Elements, fire and water, air and earth, do not more make up every mans composition, then they supply his needs: the whole host of heaven, the Sun, Moon and Stars, *Moses* will tell us, are by *God divided to all nations under the whole Heaven*, Deut. 4. 19. Those replendent bodies, equally afford their light and influence to all. The Sun shines as bright on the poor Cottage, as one the most magnificent Palace; and the Stars have their benign Aspects, as well for him, that *is behind the Mill*, as *for him that sitteth on the Throne*, Exod. 11. 5. Propriety (that great incendiary below) breeds no confusion in those celestial Orbs, but they are every mans treasure, yet no mans peculiar (as if they meant to teach us, that our love of appropriation *descends not from above*, Jam. 3. 15. is no heavenly quality.)

8. And as they make no distinction of the ranks and degrees of men, so neither do they of their vertues. Our Saviour tells us, God causes

cauſes *his Sun to riſe on the good and on the evil, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt*, Matth. 5. 45. If now we deſcend lower to the ſublunary creatures, they equally pay their homage to man do not diſdain the dominion of the poor, & ſubmit to that of the rich, but ſhew us that their inſtinct extends to the whole nature. An horſe draws the poor mans plough, as tamely as the Princes chariot, and the beggars hungry cur follows him with as much obſequiouſneſs and affection as the pampered lap-dogs of the niceſt Ladies. The ſheep obey a poor mercenary ſhepherd as well as they did the Daughters of the wealthy *Laban*, Gen. 29.9. or of *Jethro* a Prince, Exod. 2. 16. and as willingly yield their fleece to clothe *Lazarus*, as to make purple for *Dives*. And as animals, ſo vegetables are as communicative of their qualities to one man as another. The corn nurishes, the fruits refresh, the flowers delight, the ſimples cure the poor man as well as the rich.

9. But I foreſee it will be objected, that theſe natural priviledges are inſignificant, becauſe they are evacuated by thoſe poſitive laws which bound propiety, and that therefore though one man could uſe the creatures as well as another, yet every man has them not to uſe. I anſwer, that for ſome of the things I have mentioned, they are ſtill in their native latitude, cannot be incloſed or monopolized.

The most ravenous oppressor could never yet lock up the Sun in his chest: *he that lays house to house, and land to land, till there be no place*, Esai 5.8. cannot inclose the common air: and the like may be said of divers of the rest, so that there are some (and those no mean) blessings, which continue still the indefeisible right of mankind in general.

10. As for those other things which are lyable to the restrictive terms of *meum* and *tuum*, 'tis not to be denyed but there is vast difference in the dispensing them; as great as *Nathans* parable describes, when he speaks of the numerous Flocks of the rich man, and the *single ewe lamb of the poor*, 2 Sam. 12.2. yet there is scarce any so deplorably indigent, but that by one means or other, he has or may have the necessary supports of life. Perhaps they fall not into his lap by birth-right & inheritance, yet they are acquirable by labor and industry, which is perhaps the better tenure. They cannot it may be arrive to *Sodoms fulness of bread*: yet if they have not her *abundance of Idleness*, Ezek. 16.49. they commonly need not want that, which was the height of *Agurs* wish, *food convenient*, Prov. 30.8. 'Tis true indeed, if they will fold their hands in their bosome, if with *Solomons sluggard, they will not plough by reason of the cold*, they must take his fate in the summer, as they have his ease in the winter, *they may beg in harvest, and have nothing*,

Prov.

Prov. 10. 4. but then 't is visible they are the Authors of their own necessities. And indeed to men of such lazy careless natures, 't is hard to say, what degree of Gods bounty can keep them from want, since we often see the fairest fortunes dissipated as well by the supine negligence, as the riotous prodigality of the owners: And therefore if men will be idle, they are not to accuse God, but themselves if they be indigent.

11. But then there is one case wherein men seem more inevitably exposed, and that is when by age, sickness, or decrepitness, they are disabled from work; or when their family is too numerous for their work to maintain. And this indeed seems the most forlorn state of poverty: yet God has provided for them also, by assigning such persons to the care of the rich; nay, he has put an extraordinary mark of favour on them, given them the honor of being his proxies & representatives, made them letters of Attorny (as it were) to demand relief in his name, and upon his account. And though 'tis too true, that even that Authority will not prevail with many of the rich to open their purses, yet even in this Age of frozen charity, there are still some who remember upon what terms they received their wealth, & employ it accordingly. And though the number of them is not so great as were to be wisht, yet there are in all parts some scar-

ſcattered here and there like *Cities of refuge* in the Land, Deut. 19. 2. to which these poor diſtreſſed creatures may flee for ſuccour. And I think I may ſay, that between the legal proviſions that are made in this caſe and voluntary contributions, there are not very many that want the things that are of abſolute neceſſity: and we know St. *Paul* comprizes thoſe in a ſmall compaſs, *food and raiment*, and propoſes them as ſufficient materials of Content. 1 *Tim.* 6. 8. I ſay not this to contract any mans bowels, or leſſen his compaſſions to ſuch poor wretches. For how much ſoever they lend, I wish as *Joab* did in another caſe to *David*, the Lord *increaſe it a hundred fold*, 2 Sam. 24. 3. I only urge it as an evidence of the aſſertion I am to prove, that no man is ſo pretermitted by God or his diſpoſal of temporals, but that even he that ſeems the moſt abandoned has a share in his providence, and conſequently cannot juſtly murmur, ſince even this ſtate which is the higheſt inſtance of humane indigence, is not without its receits from God.

12. But the number in this form are but few, compared to thoſe in a higher: for between this and the higheſt affluence, how many intermedial degrees are there, in which men partake not onely of the neceſſaries, but comforts of life; that have not only food and raiment, but their diſtinction of holy-day and working-day, fare and apparel? He that is but

but one ſtep advanced from beggary has to much, he that has got to a ſecond has more then is neceſſary: and ſo every degree riſes in plenty till it comes to vanity and exceſs. And even there too there are gradual riſings, ſome having ſo much fewel for luxury, that they are at as great a loſs for invention, as others can be for materials, and complain that there are no farther riots left for them to eſſay. How many are there who have ſo clog'd and glutted their ſenſes, that they want ſome other inlets for pleaſure, and with the rich man in the Gospel, are in diſtreſs where to beſtow their abundance?

13. And ſure ſuch as theſe cannot deny that they have received good things, yet generally there are none leſs contented; which is a clear demonſtration, that our repinings proceed not from any defect of bounty in God, but from the malignant temper of our own hearts. And as it is an eaſier thing to ſatisfie the cravings of an hungry, then to cure the nauſeous recoilings of a ſurfeited ſtomach: ſo certainly the diſcontents of the poor, are much eaſier allayed then thoſe of the rich: the indigence of the one has contracted his deſires, and has taught him not to look farther then a little beyond bare neceſſaries, ſo that a moderate Alms ſatisfies, and a liberal tranſports him: but he who by a perpetual repletion has his deſires ſtretcht and extended, is capable of no

ſuch

such satisfaction: when his enjoyment forestall all particular pursuits, and he knows not upon what to fasten his next wish; yet even then he has some confused unformed appetite, and thinks himself miserable, because he cannot tell what would make him more happy. And yet this is that envied state which men with so much greediness aspire to: every man looks on it as the top of felicity to have nothing more to wish in the World. And yet place, even that when attained, would be their torment. Let men never think then that Contentment is to be caught by long and forreign chases; he is likeliest to find it who sits at home, and duly contemplates those blessings which God has brought within his reach, of which every man has a fair proportion, if he will advert to it.

14. For besides these external accessions (of which the meanest have some, the middle sort a great deal, and the uppermost rather too much) man is a principality within himself, and has in his composure so many excellent impresses of his Makers power and goodness, that he need not ask leave of any exterior thing to be happy, if he know but aright how to value himself. The very meanest part of him, his body is a piece of admirable workmanship, of a most incomprehensible contrivance, as the Psalmist sayes, he is fearfully and wonderfully made; and 't is astonishing to think

think of what a ſymmetry of parts this beautifull fabric is made up. Nor are they only for ſhew, but uſe: every member, every limb is endowed with a particular faculty to render it ſerviceable to the whole; and ſo admirable is the contexture of veins and arteries, ſinues and muſcles, nerves and tendons, that none are ſuperfluous, but ſome way or other contribute to vegetation, ſenſe, or motion. Nay, the moſt noble and moſt uſeful parts are all of them double, not onely as a reſerve in caſe of miſadventure of one part; but alſo as an inſtance of the bounty of the Donor. And indeed, it is obſervable of *Galen* in his writings, that after he had taken great care to exemt himſelf and all of his Profeſſion from taking notice of the Deity, by ſaying that to diſcourſe concerning the Gods, was the task of ſpeculative Philoſophers; yet coming to write *de uſu partium*, and conſidering the frame of humane bodies, and therein diſcovering the wonderful contrivance of every part in reference to its ſelf, and alſo to the vvhole; their ſtrength, agility, and various movement, infinitely ſurpaſſing the powers of all Mechanic engines; he ſeems to have had the fate we read of *Saul* in holy Scripture, and againſt his genius and purpoſe to become a Prophet; breaking frequently out into Hymns and ſacred raptures; ſaying, theſe Myſteries

are

are more divine then the *Samothracian* or *Eleusinian*; and confessing they both strictly require and infinitly excell the low returns of humane praise. But beyond the fabrick of part as organic, what an extract of wonders are our senses, those *five operations of the Lord*, the son of *Syrach* rightly (and by way of eminence) stiles them, Eccles. 17. 5. By these we draw all outward objects to our selves. What were the beauties of the universe to us, if we had not sight to behold them, or the most melodious sounds, if we had not hearing? and so of the rest. And yet these are not only generally given, but also preserved to the greater part of men: and perhaps would be to more, did not our base undervaluing of common mercies, force God sometimes to instruct us in their worth, by making us feel what it is to want them.

15. Multitude of refreshments also God has provided for our bodies, particularly that of sleep, of which he has been so considerate as in his distributions of time, to make a solemn allotment for it: yet who almost when he lies down considers the mercy, or when he rises refresht, rises thankful also? But if our rest at any time be interrupted by the cares of our mind, or pains of our bodies, then (and not till then) we consider, that tis God *who gives his beloved sleep*, Psalm 127. 2. and think it a blessing worth our esteem. Thus if

s with health, ſtrength, and every thing elſe, we deſpiſe it whilſt we have it, and impatiently deſire it whilſt we have it not; but in the interim ſure we cannot complain, that Gods hand is ſhortned towards us, when in the ordinary courſe of his providence we commonly enjoy theſe mercies many years, which we find ſo much miſs of, if they be withdrawn but for a few hours. And indeed there is not a greater inſtance of humane pravity then our ſenſeleſs contempt of bleſſings, meerly becauſe they are cuſtomary; which in true reaſon is an argument why we ſhould prize them the more. When we deal with men, we diſcern it well enough: he that gives me once a hundred pounds, I account not ſo much my benefactor, as if he made it my annual revenue: yet God muſt loſe his thanks, by multiplying his favours; and his benefits grow more inviſible by their being alwayes before us.

16. But the body (with its enjoyment) is but the loweſt inſtance of Gods bounty: tis but a decent caſe for that ineſtimable Jewel he has put in it: the ſoul, like the Ark, is the thing for which this whole tabernacle was framed, and that is a ſpark of Divinity in which alone it is that God accompliſhed his deſign of *making man in his own image*, Geneſ. 1. 26. 'T would be too long to attempt an exact ſurvey of its particular excellencies; the meer in-

intellectual powers wherewith it is indued, have exercised the curiosity and raised the admiration of the great contemplators of nature in all ages; yet after all, of so subtle composure is the soul, that it is inscrutable even to itself: and though the simplest man knows he has the faculties of Imagination, Apprehension, Memory, Reflecting; yet the learned cannot assign where they are seated, or by what means they operate. 'T is enough to us that we have them, and many excellent uses for them; one whereof (and a most necessary one) is a thankful reflexion on the goodness of God who gave them. He might have made us in the very lowest form of creatures, insensible as stocks or stones; or if he had advanced us a step higher, he might have fixt us among meer animals, transcripts perhaps of the noxious, at the best of the tamer sort of beasts: but he has placed us in the highest rank of visible creatures, and not onely given *Dominion over the works of his hands*, Psalm 8. 6. but has given us the use of reason wherewith to manage that soveraignty, without which we had only been the more masterful sort of brutes.

17. Yet still the soul is to be considered in a higher notion, that of its immortality and capacity of endless bless. And here indeed it own its extraction, and is an image of the first being, whose felicity is coexistent with him-

self

self. This as it is the most transcendant accomplishment of our nature, so it is most universal. Whatever disparity there may be between man and man in other respects, yet in this all are equal; the poor begger at the gate has a soul as capacious of eternal happiness, as he whose *crumbs* he begs for (nay, sometimes better prepared for it, as that parable shews, *Luk.* 16. 21.) And though the dignities of earth are the prize of the rich and noble, the subtle and designing; yet heaven is as easily mounted from the dung-hill as the throne, & an honest simplicity will sooner bring us thither, then all the Machiavelian policy. Nay, God has not only designed us to so glorious an end, but has done all on his part to secure us of it, sent his Son to lead us the way, his spirit to quicken us in it. We need not dispute how universal this is, 'tis sure it concerns all to whom I am now speaking, those that are within the pale of the Church: and if it should prove confined only to them, the more peculiar is their obligation, that are thus singled out from the rest of the World, and the greater ought to be their thankfulness. The heathen Philosopher made it matter of his solemn acknowledgment to fortune, that he was born a Grecian, and not a barbarian: and sure the advantages of our Christianity are of a much higher strein, and ought to be infinitly more celebrated. The Apostle we find oftē applauding this glorious

glorious privilege, as that which makes us *fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the houshold of God*, Ephes. 3. 19. nay, which elevates us to a higher state, *the adoption of sons*, Gal. 4. 5. nor only Sons, but *Heirs also of God, and joynt Heirs with Christ*, Rom. 8. 17. And what ambition is there so greedy which this will not satisfie? yet this is our common state, the birth-right of our regeneration, if we do not degrade our selves, and with *Esau* basely sell our title.

18. And now me thinks every man may interrogate himself in the same form, wherein *Jonadab* did *Amnon*, 2 Sam. 13. 4. *Why art thou, being the Kings son, thus lean from day to day?* Why should a Person who is adopted by the King of kings, thus languish and pine? What is there below the Sun worthy his notice, much less his desires, that hath a Kingdom above it? Certainly, did we but know how to estimate our selves upon this account, 't were impossible for us with such sordid condescentions to court every petty worldly interest, and so impatiently vex our selves when we cannot attain it. Alace, how unworthily do we bear the name of Christians, when that which carried the Fore-fathers of our Faith through the most fiery tryals, cannot support us under the disappointment of any extravagant desire? They had such *respect to the recompence of the reward*, Hebr. 11. 26. as made them

them cheerfully expose their Fame to ignominy, their Goods to rapine, their Bodies to the most exquisite tortures, and their Lives to death. Yet the same hopes cannot work us to any tolerable degree of patience, when we suffer but the smallest diminution in any of these. What shall we say? Is Heaven grown less valuable, or Earth more then it was then? No surely, but we are more infatuated in our estimates: we have so long abetted the rivalry of the hand-maid, that the Mistress, like *Sarah*, appears despicable. Like *Jonah* we sit down sullen upon the withering of a gourd, never considering that God has provided us a better shelter, *a building of God eternal in the Heavens*, 2 Cor. 5. 1. Indeed there can be no temporal destitution so great, which such an expectation cannot make supportable. Were in *Jobs* condition sitting upon a dung-hill, and scraping our selves with a pot-sheard, yet as long as we can say with him *our redeemer liveth*, Job 19. 25. We have all reason to say with him also, *blessed be the name of the Lord.* Chap. 1. 21. What a madness is it then for us to expose our selves to be pierced and wounded by every temporal adversity, who have so impenetrable an armour? nay, what an ungrateful contumely is it to that goodness of God, to shew that we cannot make him a counterpoise to the most trivial secular satisfaction? on which account sure he

may again take up that exprobrating complaint we find in the Prophet, *A godly price that* I *was valued at by them*, Zac. 11.13.

19. But how mean soever he is in our eyes though *Christ* seem the same to us in his glory which he did in his abjection, to have no beauty that we should desire him; yet he puts another rate upon himself, and tell us, *He that loves father or mother, son or daughter more then me, is not worthy of me*, Mat. 10.37. Now our love and our joy are passions co-incident, and therefore whatever we joy more in then we do in him, we may be presumed to love better; and if he cannot endure the competition of those more ingenuous objects of our love he there mentions, how will he suffer that of our vanities, our childish wanton appetites? and yet those are the things after which we so impatiently rave. For I believe we may truly affirm, that if there were a scrutiny made into all the discontents of mankind, for one that were fastned upon any great considerable calamity, there are many that are founded only in the irregularity of our own desires.

20. By what has been said we may justly conclude in the Prophets Phrase, *God hath not been to us a wilderness, a land of darkness*, Jer. 2.31. but has graciously dispenced to us in all our interests. Yet the instances here given are only common, such as relate to all, or at least the far greater part of mankind: but what

volums might be made, should every man set down his own particular experiences of mercy? In that case 't would be no extravagant Hyperbole we find, John 22. 25. *That even the world it self could not contain the books which should be written.* God knows our memories are very frail, and our observations slight in this point: yet abstracting from all the forgotten or neglected favours, what vast catologues may every man make to himself, if he would but yet recollect what effect he has had of Gods bounty in giving, of his providence in protecting, of his grace in restraining, and exciting, of his patience in forbearing? And certainly all these productions of the divine goodness were never designed to die in the birth. The Psalmist will tell us, *The Lord hath so done his marvellous works, that they ought to be had in remembrance*, Psal. 111. 4. Let every man then make it his daily care to recount to himself the wonders God hath done, as for the children of men in general, so for himself in particular. When the *Israelites* murmured under their bondage, *Pharaoh* imputes it to their idleness, and prescribes them more work, as the readiest cure: a piece indeed of inhumane Tyranny in him, but may with equity and success be practised by us upon our selves. When we find our appetites mutinous, complaining of our present condition, let us set our selves to work, impose it as a task

upon our selves to recollect the many instances of Gods mercies. And surely if we do it sincerely, and with intention, we cannot have past through half our stages, before our sullen murmures will be beat out of countenance, and retire with shame, when they are confronted with such a cloud of witnesses, such signal testimonies of Gods goodness to us: for when we have mustered up all our little grievances, most critically examined all our wants, we shall find them very unproportionable to our comforts, and to our receits; in which comparative notion, the next Section is to consider them.

SECT. IV.

Of the Surplusage of our Enjoyments above our Sufferings.

1. TO regulate our estimate of those things which we either enjoy or suffer, there are three precedent queries to be made: The first of their number or plenty: The second of their weight: The third of their constancy and continuance; For according as they partake more of these properties, every good is more good, and every evil is more evil. It will therefore be our best method of tryal in the present case, to compare our blessings and our calamities in these three respects.

2. And

2. And first in that of plenty. The mercies of God are the source of all our good, are set out to us in holy Scripture in the most *superlative* strain: They are *multitudes*, Psal. 102. 20. *Plenteous redemption*, Psalm 130. 7. *as high as the Heaven.* Psalm 103. 11. *He fills all living with plenteousness*, Psalm 145. 16. His mercies indeed are such as come not within the compass of number, but stretch themselves to infinity, and are best represented by such a calculation as God made to *Abraham*, when he shewed him the numerousness of his posterity by the innumerableness of the Stars, *Gen.* 15. 5. Were there but a single mercy apportioned to each minute of our lives, the sum would arise very high: but how is our Arithmetic confounded, when every minute has more then we can distinctly number? for besides the original stock mentioned in the last Section, and the accession of new bounty, the giving us somewhat which we had not before; what an accumulative mercy is it, the preserving what we have? We are made up of so many pieces, have such varieties of interests, spiritual, temporal, publick, and private; for our selves, for our friends, and dependents; that it is not a confused general regard that will keep all these in security one moment. We are like a vast building, which costs as much to maintain, as to erect. And indeed considering the corruptibleness of our

materials, our preſervation is no leſs a work of Omnipotence, then our firſt forming; nay, perhaps 't is rather a greater. Our original clay, though it had no aptneſs, yet it had no averſing to the receiving a humane form; but was in the hand of the Potter to make it what he pleaſed: but we now have principles of decay within us, which vehemently tend to diſſolution; we want the ſupplies of ſeveral things without us, the failing whereof returns us again to our duſt. Nay, we do not only need the aid, but we fear the hoſtility of outward things. That very air which ſometimes refreſhes us, may at another ſtarve and freez us: that which warms and comforts us, has alſo a power of conſuming us. Yea, that very meat which nurishes, may choak and ſtifle us. In a word, there is no creature ſo deſpicable, ſo inconſiderable, which may not ſometimes ſerve us, and which may not at any time (if God permit) ruine us. Now whence is it that we ſo conſtantly, ſo frequently find the good, the benign efficacy of theſe things, and ſo ſeldom ſo rarely the evil? whence I ſay is it, but from the active unwearied providence, which draws forth the better properties of the creatures for our uſe, and reſtrains the worſer for our ſecurity? which with a particular advertence watches not only over every Perſon, but over every ſeveral concern of that perſon. And how aſtoniſhing a contemplation

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is this? If the meer ebbing and flowing of the sea, put the Philosopher into such an extasy, that he flung himself into it, because he could not comprehend the inscrutable cause of it: in what perpetual raptures of admiration may we be, who have every minute within us, and about us, more and greater wonders, and those too in our favor, when we deserve rather the divine power should extend it self in our destruction?

3. But alace our danger from the visible creatures, is little compared with those from the spirits of darkness. *We wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities & powers, with spiritual wickedness*, &c. Eph. 6. 12. So inveterate is the enmity between the *Serpent* & the *seed* of the *woman* in general, that he watches all advantages against us, not only in our souls, but even our bodies, our goods, & in every part of our concerns. Thus we see he not only assaulted *Jobs* soul by the wicked insinuations of his Wife, but (with more effect) his body with boils and sores, his possessions by the *Chaldeans* and *Sabeans*, and the images of himself, his dearest children, by a wind from the wilderness, *Iob* 1. And can we think his malice is now worn out? no surely, he still wishes as ill to mankind as ever, & we should soon see the woful effects of it, did not the same power which let him loose for *Jobs* tryal, restrain him for our safety. Nay, had he but power to affright, though not to hurt us, even that

would make our lives very uncomfortable. We cannot hear the relation of Sprights or apparitions, but our blood chills upon it, and a horror runs through our veins: what should we then do if he should make his night-walks through our chambers, and with his illusory terrors disturb our rest? Yet all this and much more he would do, if God did not chain up this *old Dragon*, Revel. 20. Nay, if he were not at the expence of a guard about us, and those no less then Angels. I shall not dispute whether every person hath not his peculiar Guardian: for though many have not improbably asserted it, we have ground enough of acquiescence in the general affirmation of the Apostle, *that they are all ministring Spirit, sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation*, Hebr. 1.4. And now if the Reader please to sum up how many are his concerns, and how many are the dangers which await him in them all, he cannot sure render the account of those mercies which preserve the one, and divert the other, in any other Phrase then that of the Psalmist, *They are more then I am able to express*, Psalm 40. 7.

4. We may now challenge the most miserable, or the most querulous man living to produce causes of complaint, proportionable to those of thanksgiving. He that has the greatest stock of calamities, can never vye with the heaps of benefits; the disproportion is

greater

greater then that of the armies of *Ahab* and *Benhadab*, 1 Kings 20. 27. whereof the one was like *two little flocks of Kids, the other filled the country*. God has told us that he *afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men*, Lam. 3. 33. whereas on the contrary, he *delighteth in mercy*, Mic. 7. 18. We may judge by our selves which he is the likeliest often to repete, those acts which he doth with regret and reluctancy, or those which he do's with pleasure and delight. But we need no inferences where we have the attestation of experience. Let every man therefore make this his judge in the case, let him every night recollect, how many things within and about him he is concern'd in, and consider how many of those have been preserved intire to him, still accounting every thing so continued as a new donation. If he begin with his spiritual state, 't is too possible he may sometimes find he has lost his innocence, committed some, perhaps many sins: but even in these he will find cause to justifie God, if he do but recollect with what inward checks, and admonitions, and outward restraints, God has endeavoured to bridle him. If he will break through those fences, that does not at all derogate from the mercy of God which so guarded him, but it rather illustrates his goodness, that after so many quenchings of his Spirit, do's yet continue its influence. So that even he that has

the moſt deplorably violated his integrity, is yet to confeſs that Gods purpoſe was to have preſerved it intire: and he might really ſo have kept it, had he complyed with thoſe aids which were afforded him. But in temporal concerns we are not ſo apt to undermine our ſelves, and therefore ſhall much more rarely find we have ſuffered detriment in them, then in our ſpiritual: but are there ordinarily like to meet with a better account. Let a man therefore conſider, what is lacking to him of all the ſecular good things he had in the morning, and tell me whither for the moſt part he may not give ſuch an account, as the *Iſraelitiſh* Officers did of their men after the ſlaughter of the *Midianites*, *that he hath not loſt one.* Numb. 31. 30. Or, if ſometimes he do ſuffer a diminution, yet at the worſt he will find that many more good things have been preſerved to him then have been taken from him. A man may perhaps meet with ſome damage in his eſtate, yet 't is manifold odds that that damage is but partial, and that he has ſtill more left then is loſt. Or if it be more intire; yet if he have his health, his limbs, his ſenſes, his friends, and all things beſide his eſtate left him, ſo that for one thing he has loſt; he ſtill retains a multitude, he may ſay of it as the Diſciples of the few loaves, *what is this among ſo many?* Matth. 14. 17. *Ariſtippus* being bemoaned for the loſſe of a Farm,

Farm, replied with ſome sharpneſs upon his Condoler, you have but one field, and I have yet three left, why should I not rather grieve for you? intimating that a man is not ſo much to eſtimate what he has loſt, as what he has left. A piece of wiſdom which if we would tranſcribe we might quickly convince our ſelves, that even in our moſt adverſe eſtate there are as *Elijah* ſpeaks *more with us then against us*, 2 King. 6. 16. that our enjoyments are more then our ſufferings, and Gods acts of grace, do far out-number thoſe of his ſeverity.

5. And as they do out-number, ſo alſo do they out-weigh them. The mercies we receive from God are (as the laſt Section has shewed) of the greateſt importance: the moſt ſubſtantial ſolid goods, and the greateſt of all, I mean thoſe which concern our eternal ſtate, are ſo firmly fixt on us, that unleſs we will voluntarily quit our claim, 't is not in the power of men or devils to defeat us. Light bodies are eaſily blown away by every guſt of wind, but this *weight of glory*, as the Apoſtle calls it, 2 Corinth. 4. 17. continues firm and ſtable, is proof againſt all ſtorms, like the *shadow of a great rock in a weary Land*, Iſai. 32. 2. Thoſe dark adumbrations we have of it, might have ſerved to refreshand deceive the rediouſneſs of our pilgrimage, and therefore the moſt formidable calamities of this life are below all meaſures of compariſon with this hope of our

calling, this *riches of the glory of our inheritance.* Ephes. 3. 16. The heaviest and most pressing of our afflictions are to that, *but like the small dust of the balance:* Esai. 40. 15. so that if we should here stop our inquisition, we have a sufficient resolution of the present question, and must conclude, that God has given us an abundant counterpoise of all, we either do or can suffer here.

6. If therefore there be any so forlorn as to temporals, that he can fetch thence no evidence of Gods fatherly care of him, yet this one consideration may solve his doubts, and convince him that he is not abdicated by him. We read of no gifts *Abraham* gave *Isaac*, yet to the sons of the Concubines 't is said he did, *Gen.* 25. 6. It had been a very fallacious inference, if *Isaac* should have concluded himself neglected, because his far greater portion was but in reversions. And it will be the same in any of us, if we argue an unkindness from any temporal wants who have the entail of an eternal inheritance. But surely *God do's not leave himself without witness,* Acts 14. 17. even in secular things, there is no man breathing but has some blessings of his left hand, as well as his right, as I have already mention'd: and unless it be some few prodigies of Calamity in whose punishment or patience God designs signally to glorifie himself, there are none who enjoy not greater comforts of life

then

then those they want, I mean such as are really greater, though perhaps, to their prejudicated fancies they do not appear so. Thus in point of health, if a man be dis-affected in one part, yet all the rest of his body may be (and often is) well; or if he have a complication, and have more then one disease, yet there is no man that has all, or half so many as are incident to humane bodies, so that he is comparatively more healthy then sick. So again, it is not very common for a man to lose a limb, or sense, the generality of men keep them to their last, and they who do, have in that an over-balance to most outward adversities; and even they who are so unhappy to lose one, yet commonly keep the rest; at least the major part: or if at any time any man is left a mere breathing trunk, yet it is by such stupifying diseases as dead the sense, or such mortal ones as soon take them away; and so the remedy overtakes the Malady. Besides it pleases God very often, to make compensation for the want of one member or faculty, by improving the use of another. We have seen feet supply all the necessary uses of hands to those who had none; and it is a thing of daily observation that men that are blind, have the greater internal light: have their intellects more vigorous and active, by their abstractions from visible objects.

7. Thus also it is in the matter of wealth,

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7. Thus also it is in the matter of wealth, he

he that is forced to get his bread by the sweat of his brows, 'tis true, he cannot have those delicacies wherewith rich men abound; yet his labour helps him to a more poignant, a more savory sauce then a whole Colledge of Epicures can compound. His hunger gives a higher gust to his dry crust, then the surfeited stomach can find in the most costly, most elaborate mixtures: verifying the observation of *Solomon, the full soul loatheth the hony comb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*, Prov. 27. 7. He cannot *indeed stretch himself upon his bed of Ivory*, Amos 6. 4. yet his sleeps are sounder then those that can. The wise man tells us, and experience does so too, that *the sleep of a labouring man is sweet*, Eccles. 5. 12. He is not cloathed gorgeously, has not the splendor of glittering apparel, so neither has he the care of contriving it, the fears of being forestal'd in a new invention, or any of those unmanly solicitudes which attend that vanity. He has the proper genuine use of cloathing: the preventing shame and cold, and is happily determined to that which the wiser men of the world have voluntarily chosen. To conclude, he has one advantage beyond all these; his necessities rescue him from idleness, and all its consequent temptations; which is so great a benefit, that if rich men be not their own task-masters as his wants are his, if they do not provide themselves

ſelves of buſineſs; that one wants of theirs is infinitely more deplorable then all his: and he is not only happy comparatively with himſelf, in having better things then he wants, but with them alſo.

8. If we come now to reputation and fame, the account will be much the ſame. He that is eminent in the World for ſome great atchievement, is ſet up as an object of every mans remark; when as his excellencies on the one hand are viſible, ſo his faults and blemiſhes are on the other. And as humane frailty makes it too probable theſe letter will be really more, ſo humane envy makes it ſure that they ſhall be more preciſely, more curiouſly obſerved, and more loudly blazon'd. So that upon the whole, a good quiet ſecurity, though it be not the road to glory, yet is the likelieſt fence againſt infamy. And indeed, he that can keep up the repute of a ſober integrity within his own private ſphere, need not envy the triumphant ſallies of others, which often meet with a fatal turn at the latter end of the day. But 't will be ſaid, that even that more moderate ſort of reputation is not every mans portion, but that many lie under great ignominy and ſcandals. I ſhall here ask whether thoſe be juſt or unjuſt: If they be juſt, they belong not to our preſent ſubject, which relates only to thoſe inflictions which are the effects of Gods immediate

mediate providence, not of our own crimes; for I never doubted but that by those we may divest our selves of any; nay, of all the good things God has design'd us. But if the obloquy be unjust, 't is propable that 't is taken up only by ill men, and that the good pass a more equitable sentence; and then surely the attestation of a few such, is able to out-weigh a multitude of the others. And in this case a man may not only find patience but pleasure in reproaches. *Socrates* lookt with trouble and jealousie on himself when ill men commended him, saying, what ill have I done? and sure a Christian has a farther reason to be pleased with their revilings, they being his security against the *woe* pronounced to those *whom all men speak well of*, Luke 6. 26. But sometimes it happens, that even good men are seduced, and either by the artifices of the wicked, or their own too hasty credulity, give credit to unjust reports. And this I confess is a sharp tryal to the injured person, yet even this cannot often be universal, there can scarce be any innocence so forlorn, but that there may be opportunities of cleering it to some or other, and by them propagating it to more, and if the cloud ever come to be dispersed, their fame will appear with the brighter luster. But if none of this happen, they have yet a certain and more blessed retreat, even an appeal to the unerring judge, who never beholds

holds us with more approbation, then when we are under the unjuſt condemnation of men. Indeed, we have then a double tye upon him, not only his juſtice, but his pity is concerned in our cauſe. God particularly owns himſelf as the refuge of the oppreſſed, and there is ſcarce a sharper and more ſenſible oppreſſion then this of Calumny; yet even this proves advantage, whileſt it procures Gods immediate patronage, makes us the objects of his more peculiar care and compaſſion, who can *make our righteouſneſs as cleer as the light*, Pſal. 37. 6. if he ſee it fit; but if in his wiſdom he chuſe not that for us, 't is comfort enough for us that we have approved it to him. 't Was *Elkanahs* queſtion to *Hannah* in her diſconſolation, *Am not I better to thee then ten Sons?* 1 Sam. 1. 8. And ſure we may ſay the like of Gods approbation, that 't is better to us I ſay not then ten, but ten thouſand Eulogies of men. The very Echo of it in the teſtimony of a good conſcience is an unſpeakable comfort, and this voyce ſounds more audibly, more ſweetly, among the loudeſt, the harsheſt accuſations of men. So that we ſee even this aſſault too is not without its guard, and theſe *waters of Marah*, Exod. 15. 23. may be render'd not only wholſome but pleaſant.

9. I have now inſtanced in the three moſt general concerns of humane life, the Body, Goods,

Goods, and Fame, to which heads may be reduced most of the afflictions incident to our outward state, as far as immediately concerns our selves. But there is no man stands so single in the World, but he has some relations or friends in which he thinks himself interested, and many times those oblique strokes which wound us through them, are as painful as the more direct: yet here also God is ordinarily pleased to provide some allayes, if we would but take notice of them. He who has had one friend die, has ordinarily divers others surviving; or if he have not that, usually God raises him up others. 'T is true we cannot have a succession of Fathers and Mothers, yet we often have of other friends that are no less helpful to us: and indeed, there are scarce in any thing more remarkable evidences of Providence, then in this particular, *He that is able out of stones to raise up children to Abraham*, Matt. 3. 9. do's many times by as unexpected a production supply friends to the desolate. But we do sometimes lose our friends while they are living, they withdraw their kindness which is the soul of friendship: and if this happen by our own demerit, we can accuse neither God nor them for it: nor can we rationally expect that God should provide supplies, when we wilfully despoil our selves. But when they are unkind without provocation, then is the season for his interposition; who uses

uſes to take up *thoſe whom Father and Mother forſake*, Pſalm 27. 10. and we frequently ſee ſignal proofs of his care in exciting the compaſſions of other friends and relatives, or perhaps of meer ſtrangers. Nay, ſometimes God makes the inhumanity of a mans relations, the occaſion of his advantage. Thus the barbarous malice of *Joſephs* brethren, was the firſt ſtep to his Dominion over Egypt. And it is a common obſervation in Families, that the moſt diſcountenanced child oft makes better proof, then the dearling.

10. We are yet lyable to a third affliction by the calamity of our friends, which by the Sympathy of kindneſs preſſes us no leſs (perhaps more) ſenſibly then our own: but then 'tis to be conſidered that theirs are capable of the ſame allaying circumſtances that ours are, and God has the ſame arts of alleviating their burdens; ſo that we have the ſame arguments for acquieſcence in their ſufferings that we have in our own; and ſhall do a more friendly office in impreſſing thoſe upon them, then in the moſt paſſionate adopting their ſorrows.

11. The laſt and greateſt diſcomfort from friends, is that of their ſin: and if ever we may be allowed that diſconſolate ſtrein of the Prophet, Eſa. 22. 4. *Turn away from me, I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me*: this ſeems to be the time. Yet even this *valley of Achor*

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is not without a door of hope, Hos. 22. 15. A vicious person may be recalled, multitudes have been; so that as long as God continues life, we ought no more to deposite our hope then to quit our endeavour. Besides, there are few that make this complaint that have not something to balance, or at least to lighten it. I shall instance in that relation which is the nearest and most tender, that of a Parent. He that has one bad child may have divers good. If he have but one virtuous, 't is a very great mercy, and 't is another that he may be the better taught to value it by the opposition of the contrary. But if any be so unhappy as to have many children, and *all to consume his eyes and grieve his heart*, 1 Sam. 2. 33. it may be a seasonable reflexion for him to examine how far he has contributed to it, either by *Elies* found indulgence, or by a remiss and careless education: or which is worst of all, by his most impious example. If any, or all of these be found the cause, he is not so much to seek for allayes to his grief, as for pardon of his sin: and when he has penitently retracted his own faults, he may then have better ground of hope that God may reform those of his children. In the meantime, he may look on his own affliction in them as Gods discipline on him, and gather at least this comfort from it, that his heavenly Father has more care of him, then he had of his; and do's not leave him uncorrected.

12. Thus

12. Thus we see in all the concerns (which are the most common and important of humane life, and wherein the justest of our complaints are usually founded) there is such a temperature and mixture, that the good does more then equal the ill; and that not only in the grosser bulk, when our whole state is weighed together, but in every single branch of it: God having herein dealt with this little world Man, as he has done with the greater, wherein he is observed to have furnished every country with Specific remedies for their peculiar diseases. I have only given these short hints by way of essay and pattern for the Readers contemplation, which when he shall have extended to all those more minute particulars wherein he is especially concern'd more curiously compared his sufferings, with his allayes and comforts; I cannot doubt, but he will own himself an instance of the truth of the present Thesis, and confess, that he has much more cause of thankfulness then complaint.

13. This I say supposing his afflictions to be of those more solid & considerable sorts I have before mentioned. But how many are there who have few or none of such, who seem to be seated in the land of *Goshen*, in a place exempt from all the plagues that infest their Neighbors? And those one would think should give a ready suffrage to this conclusion,

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as having no temptation to oppugn it; yet I doubt 't is far otherwise, and that such men are of all the most unsatisfied. For though they have no crosses of Gods imposing, they usually create a multitude to themselves. And here we may say with *David*, *it is better to fall into the hand of God, then into the hand of man*, 2 Sam. 24. 14. 't is easier to bear the afflictions God sends, then those we make to our selves. His are limited both for quanty and quality, but our own are as boundless as those extravagant desires from which they spring.

14. And this is the true cause why contentment is so much a stranger to those who have all the outward causes of it. They have no definite measure of their desires; 't is not the supply of all their real wants will serve their turn: their appetites are precarious and depend upon contingencies. They hunger not because they are empty, but because others are full. Many a man would have liked his own portion well enough, had he not seen another have something he liked better. Nay, even the most inconsiderable things acquire a value by being anothers, when we despise much greater of our own. *Ahab* might well have satisfied himself with the Kingdom of *Israel*, had not *Naboths* poor plot lain in his eye: but so raving were his desires after it, that he disrelishes all the pomps of a Crown; yea, the ordinery refreshments of Nature, *can eat no*

bread

bread till he have that to furnish him with Sallads, 1 *Kings* 21. 2. And how many are there now adayes whose cloaths fit uneasy, if they see another have had but the luck to be a little more ingeniously vain; whose meat is unsavory if they have seen but a greater rarity, a newer cookery at anothers Table: in a word who make other peoples excesses the standard of their own felicities.

15. Nor are our appetites only excited thus by our outward objects, but precipitated and hurried on by our inward lusts. The proud man so longs for homage and adoration, that nothing can please him if that be wanting. *Haman* can find no gust in all the sensualities of the *Persian* Court, because a poor despicable Jew denies his obeisance, *Est.* 5 13. The lustful so impatiently pursues his impure designs, that any difficulty he meets in them, makes him pine and languish like *Amnon*, who could no way recover his own health but by violating his sisters honor, 2 *Sam.* 13. 14. The revengeful labors under an hydropick thirst till he have the blood of his enemy: all the liquor of *Absoloms* sheep-sheering could not quench his, without the slaughter of his brother, 2 *Sam.* 13. 22. And thus every one of our passions keeps us upon the rack till they have obtained their designs. Nay, when they have, the very emptiness of those acquisitions is a new torment, and puts us upon fresh pursuits.

Thus

Thus between the impetuousnes of our desires, and the emptines of our enjoyments we still *disquiet our selves in vain*, Psalm 39. 7. And whilst we have such cruel task-masters, 't is not strange to find us groaning under our burdens. If we will indulge to all our vicious or foolish appetites, think our lives bound up with them, and sollicite the satisfaction of them with as impatient a vehemence, as *Rachel* did for children, Genes. 30. 1. *Give me them or I dye*: no wonder that we are always complaining of disappointments, since in these the very success is a defeat, and is but the exchanging the pain of a craving ravenous stomach, for that of a coyed and nauseated. Indeed men of temper condemn themselves to a perpetual restlesnes: they are like phantick mutineers, who when their Superiors send them blanks to write their own conditions, know not what will please them: and even Omnipotence it self cannot satisfie these till it have new moulded them, and reduced their desires to a certainty.

16. But in the mean time how unjustly do they accuse God of illiberality, because every thing answers not their humor? He has made them reasonable creatures, and has provided them satisfactions proportionable to their nature: but if they will have wild irrational expectations, neither his wisdom, nor his goodnes is concerned to satisfie those. His supplies

are real and solid, and therefore have no correspondence to imaginary wants. If we will create such to our selves, why do we not create an imaginary satisfaction to them? 'Twere the merrier frenzy of the two, to be like the mad *Athenian* that thought all the ships that came into his harbor his own: and it were better *Ixion* like to have our Arms filled with a cloud, then to have them perpetually beating our own breasts, and be still tormenting our selves with unsatisfiable desires. Yet this is the state to which men voluntarily subject themselves, and then quarrel at God, because they will not let themselves be happy. But sure their very complaints justifie God, and argue that he has dealt very kindly with them, and afforded them all the necessary accomodations of life: for did they want them, they would not be so sensible of the want of the other. He that is at perfect ease may feel with some vexation the biting of a flea or gnat, which would not be at all observable if he were upon the rack. And should God change the scene, and make these nice people feel the destitution of necessaries; all these regrets about superfluities would be overwhelmed. In the mean time how deplorable a thing is it, that we are still the poorer for Gods bounty, that those to whom he has opened his hand widest, should open their mouth so too, in outcries and murmurs?

For I think I may ſay that generally, thoſe that are the fartheſt removed from want, are ſo from content too; they take no notice of all the real ſubſtantial bleſſings they enjoy, leave theſe (like the ninty nine sheep in the wilderneſs) forgotten and neglected, to go in queſt after ſome fugitive ſatisfaction, which like a ſhadow flies ſtill faſter in proportion to their purſuit.

17. And now would God they could be recalled from this unprofitable chaſe, and inſteed of the Horſleeches note, *Give, give*, Prov. 30. 15. take up that of the Pſalmiſt, *what ſhall I render to the Lord for all the benefits he hath done unto me?* Pſalm 116. 12. Let them count how many valuable or rather ineſtimable things, they have received from his mercy, and then confront them with thoſe corrections they have found from his juſtice; and if they do this impartially, I doubt not they will find wherewithal to check their higheſt mutinies; and will joyn with me in confeſſing, that their good things abundantly outweigh their ill.

18. If now we carry on the compariſon to the laſt circumſtance, and conſider the Conſtancy, we ſhall find as wide a difference. Let us take the Pſalmiſts teſtimony, and there will appear a very diſtant date of his mercies and punishments. *His mercies endure for ever.* Pſalm 136. whereas his wrath *endures but the twinkling*

twinkling of an eye, Psalm 30. 5. And accordingly God owns his acts of severity as his *strange work*, Isai. 28. 21. that which he resorts to only upon special emergencies; but his mercies *are renewed every morning*, Lam. 3. 25. and doubtless we may all upon trial affirm the same. There are many of the most necessary comforts of life which do not only sometimes visit us as guests, but dwell with us as inmates and domesticks. How many are there who have lived in a perpetual affluence from their cradles to their graves, have never known what it is to want? And though the goods of fortune are perhaps less constant to some, yet the refreshments of nature are usually so to us all. We eat and drink, we sleep, we recreate, we converse in a continued circle, and go our round almost as constantly as the Sun does his. Or if God does sometimes a little interrupt us in it, put some short restraint upon our refreshments, yet that comparatively to the time we enjoy them, is but proportionable to the stop he has sometimes made of the Sun, *Jos.* 10. 13. 2 *Kings* 20. 8. or of the Sea, *Exod.* 14. 21. which as they were no subversions of the course of nature, so neither are those short pauses he sometimes makes, a repeal of those fixt and customary benefits his providence usually allots us. But who is there can say that any one of his afflictions has been of equal continuance, or has prest him with so

few intermissions? Perhaps he may have miſt ſome few nights ſleep: but what is that to a twelve-months, or perhaps a whole lives enjoying it? 'T is poſſible his ſtomach and his meat have not alwayes been ready together; but how much oftner have they met to his delight? and generally thoſe things that are moſt uſeful, are but rarely interrupted. Nay, to a great many, even the delicacies of life are no leſs conſtant, and their luxuries are as quotidian as their bread: whereas unleſs their vices or their fancies create uneaſineſſes to them, thoſe that come immediatly from Gods hand, make long intermiſſions and ſhort ſtays. Yet for all this they that ſhould meaſure by the unceſſantneſs of mens complaints, would judge that the ſcene was quite reverſt, and that our good things are as *Job* ſpeaks, *ſwifter then a weavers ſhuttle*, Job 7.6. whilſt our ill, like *Gehazies Leproſy*, *cleave inſeparably to us*, 2 Kings 5. 10.

19. The truth is, we will not let our ſelves enjoy thoſe intervals God allows us, but when a calamity do's retire we will ſtill keep it in fiction and imagination; revolve it in our minds, and becauſe 't is poſſible it may return, look upon it as not gone. Like Aguiſh patients we count our ſelves ſick on our well-day, becauſe we expect a fit the next. A ſtrange ſtupid folly thus to court vexation, and be miſerable in Chimera. Do's any man

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or indeed any beast desire to keep a distastful relish still in his mouth, to chew the cud upon gall and worm-wood? Yet certainly there are a multitude of people whose lives are imbittered to them meerly by these fantastic imaginary sufferings. Nor do we only fright ourselves with images and Ideas of past calamities, but we dress up new bugbears and mormoes, are Poetic and aerial in our inventions, and lay Romantic scenes of distresses. This is a thing very incident to jealous natures, who are alwayes raising alarms, to themselves. A suspicious man looks on every body with dread. One man he fears has designs upon his fortune, another on his reputation, perhaps a third upon his life: whilst in the mean time, the only ill design against him is managed by himself; his own causeless fears and jealousies which put him in a state of hostility with all the World; and do often betray him to the very things he groundlessly suspected. For it is not seldom seen that men have incurr'd real mischiefs by a fond sollicitude of avoiding imaginary ones. I do no question but this is a state calamitous enough, and shall acknowledge it very likely, that such persons shall have little or no truce from their troubles, who have such an unexhausted spring within themselves; yet we may say to them as the Prophet did to the house of *Jacob*, *Is the spirit of the Lord straitned: are these his doings?* Mich.

2. 7. Such men must not cry out that Gods hand lies heavy upon them, but their own: and so can be no impeachment to the truth of our observations, that Gods blessings are of a longer duration, keep a more fixt steddy course then his punishments. The result of all is, that the generality of mankind have good things (even as to temporals) which do in the three respects forementioned exceed the ill. I mean the true and real things which God sends, though not those fanciful ones they raise to themselves.

20. And now why should it not appear a reasonable proposition, that men should entertain themselves with the pleasanter parts of Gods dispensations to them, and not alwayes pore upon the harsher: especially since the former are so much a fairer object, and perpetually in their eye, why should we look on the more sadning spectacles of humane frailty or misfortune, through all the magnifying opticks our fancies can supply, and perversly turn away our eyes from the cheerfully? Yet this God knows is too much the case with most of us. How nicely and critically do we observe every little adverse accident of our lives? What tragical stories of them do our memories present us with? When, alace, a whole current of prosperity glides by without notice. Like little children our fingers are never off the sore place, till we have pickt every

ry light ſcatch into an Ulcer. Nay, like the leuder ſort of Beggars, we make artificial ſores to give us a pretence of complaint. And can we then expect God ſhould concern himſelf in the cure? Indeed, in the courſe of his ordinary providence there is no cure for ſuch people, unleſs it be by revulſion, the making them feel the ſmart of ſome very great and preſſing affliction. They therefore put themſelves under an unhappy dilemma, either to continue their own tormentors, or to endure the ſevereſt courſe of Gods diſcipline. 'Tis true, the laſt is the more eligible; but I am ſure the beſt way is to prevent both, by a juſt and grateful ſenſe of Gods mercies: which will be yet farther illuſtrated, if we compare them with our own demerits.

SECT. V.

Of our Demerit towards God.

1. IT is the common fault of our nature, that we are very apt to be partial to our ſelves; and to ſquare our expectations more by what we wiſh, then by what we deſerve. Something of this is viſible in our dealings with men. We oft *look to reap where we have not ſown*, Matth. 25. 25. expect benefits where we do none: yet in civil tranſactions there are ſtill remaining ſuch foot-ſteps of natural

justice, that we are not universally so unreasonable: all traffic and commerce subsisting upon the principle of equal retribution, giving one good thing for another equivalent; so that no man expects to buy corn with chaff, or Gold with dross. But in our dealings with God, we put off even this common equity; are vast in our expectations, but penurious and base in our returns; and as if God were our steward, not our Lord, we require of him with a confidence proper only to those who ask their own: whilst in the interim, what we offer to him is with such a disdainful slightness, as if we meant it rather an alms then an homage.

2. God indeed is so munificent, that he *prevents us with his blessings*, Psalm 21. 3. gives us many things before we ask: had he not done so, we could not have been so much as in a capacity of asking. But though the first and fundamental mercies are absolute & free, yet the subsequent are conditional: and accordingly we find in Scripture, that God makes no promise either concerning this life or a better, but on condition of Obedience. The Jews who had much larger proposals of temporal happiness then Christians have, yet never had them upon other terms. God expressly articled for the performance of his commands, and made all their enjoyments forfeitable upon the failure, as we may see at large

large in the book of Deuteronomy. And under the Gospel St. *Paul* appropriates the *promises as well of this life as that to come unto godliness*, 1 Tim. 4. 8. It will therefore be a material inquiry for every man, whether he have kept his title entire, and have not by breach of the condition forfeited his claim, even to the most common ordinary blessings; for if he have, common reason will tell him he can challenge none: and that the utmost he can hope for, must be only upon a new score of unmerited favour.

3. And here certainly *every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*, Rom. 3. 19. For alace, who is there that can say his obedience has been in any degree proportionable to his obligation? 'T is manifest we have all received abundantly from Gods hand; but what has he had from ours? I may challenge the best man, to cast up the account of his best day, and tell me whether his receits have not infinitely exceeded his disbursements; whether for any one good thing he has done, he has not received many. Nor is the disparity only in number, but much more in value. Gods works are perfect, all he does for us like the first six days productions, *are all very good*, Genes. 1. but alace, our very *righteousness is as filthy rags*, Esai. 64. 6. we offer *him the blind and the lame*, Mal. 1. 9. a few yawning drowsy prayers perhaps, where-

in he has the leſt share: the fuller current of our thoughts running towards our ſecular or ſinful concerns. We drop it may be a ſcanty Alms, wherein 't is odds our vain-glory ſcrambles for a share with him; if it do not wholly ingroſs it. We ſit an hour at a Sermon, but 't is rather to hear the wit or eloquence of the Preacher, then the Word of God. Like the duller ſort of animals, we like well to have our itchings ears ſcratcht, but grow ſturdy and reſtive when we should do what we are there taught. In a word all our ſervices at the best are miſerably maimed, and imperfect; and too often corrupt and unſound. So that God may well upbraid us as he did *Iſrael*, *offer it now to the Governour, will he be pleaſed with it?* Malac. 1. 8. Theſe very iniquities of our holy things, are enough to defeat all our pretences to any good from Gods hand: yet God knows this is much the beſt ſide of us: 't is not every one that can make ſo fair an appearance as this amounts to. With many, there is no place to complain of the blemiſhes of their ſacrifices, for they offer none; of whom we may ſay in the words of the Pſalmiſt, *God is not in all their thoughts*, Pſalm 10. 4. I fear there want not thoſe who drive away the day, the week, nay the year, without remembring in whoſe *hand their time is*, Pſalm 31. 15. or paying him any ſolemn tribute of it; who enjoy the ſervices of all infe-

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nor creatures, without considering that theirs are more due to the supreme Lord: in a word, who live as if they were absolutly independent; had their existence purely from themselves, and had no Creator to whom they owed their being or any consequent duty. And sure men who thus discard themselves from Gods family, have very little reason to expect the provisions of it: yet even such as these have the impudence to complain, if any thing be wanting to their needs (shall I say) or to their lusts; can ravingly profane Gods name in their impatiencies, which they know not how to use in their prayers: as if the Deity were considerable in no other notion, then that of their caterer or steward.

4. If now we seriously reflect, what can be more admirable then that infinit patience of God; who notwithstanding the miserable infirmities of the pious, and the lewd contempt of the impious, still goes on resolutly in his bounty, and continues to all mankind some, and to some all his temporal blessings? He has no obligation of justice to do so, for it is no part of his compact; he has none of gratitude, for he is perpetually affronted and disobliged. Surely we may well say with *David*, *Is this after the manner of men, O Lord* 2 Sam. 7. 19. 1 Chron. 17. 17. Can the highest humane indulgence bear any proportion with his divine Clemency: no certainly, no finite patience

but would be exhausted with the thousand part of our provocations.

5. But is not our dealing too as little after the manner of men? I mean of reasonable creatures: for us who have forfeited our right to all, and yet by meer favour are still kept in the possession of many great blessings: for us to grow mutinous, because there is perhaps something more trifling which is denyed us, is such a stupid ingratitude, as one would think impossible to humane nature. Should a Tenant with us have at once forfeited his lease and maliciously affronted his Land-lord, he would sure think himself very gently dealt with, if he were suffered to enjoy but a part of his first estate; but we should think him not only insolent, but mad, who when the whole were left him, should quarrel and clamor, if he might not have his Cottage adorned with marble floors, and gilded roofs. Yet at this wild rate we behave our selves to our great Land-lord, grow pettish and angry if we have not every thing we can fancy, though we enjoy many more useful, meerly by his indulgence. And can there be any thing imagined more unreasonable? Let us therefore, if not for piety, yet at least to justifie our claim to rationality, be more ingenuous; let us not consult only with our fond appetites, and be thus perpetually soliciting their satisfaction; but rather reflect on what tenure we hold what we

we already have, even that of superabundant mercy; and fear least like insolent beggars by the impudence of our demands we divert even that charity which was designed us. In short let every man when he computes what he wants of his desires, reckon as exactly how much he is short of his duty: and when he has duly pondered both, he will think it a very gentle composition to have the one unsupplied, so he may have the other remitted; and will see cause contentedly to sit down and say with honest *Mephibosheth*, *What right have I to cry any more unto the King?* 2 Sam. 19. 28. But if it be thus with us upon the meer score of our imperfections or omissions, what an obnoxious state do our innumerable actual sins put us in? If the spots of our sacrifices are provoking, what are our sacrileges and bold profanations? If those who neglect or forget God are listed among his enemies, what are those who avowedly defye him? Indeed, he that soberly considers the World, and sees how daringly the divine Majesty is daily affronted, cannot but wonder that the perverseons of our manners, those prodigies in morality, should not be answered with as great prodigies in calamity too, that we should ever have other ruine then that of *Sodom*, or the earth serve us for any other purpose then to be, as it was to *Korah*, Num. 16. our living sepulchre. * 31. 32. 33.

6. Nor is this longanimity of God observable only towards the mass and collective body of mankind, but to every man in particular. Who is there that if he ransack his conscience, shall not find guilts enow to justifie God in the utmost severities towards him? so that how much soever his punishments are short of that, so much he evidently owes to the lenity and compassion of God. And who is there that suffers in this World the utmost that God can inflict? We have a great many suffering capacities, and if those were all filled up to the height, our condition would scarce differ from that of the damned in any thing but duration. But God is more merciful, and never inflicts at that rate on us here. Every mans experience can tell him, that God discharges not his whole quiver at once upon him, but exempts him in many more particulars then he afflicts him; and yet the same experience will probably tell most of us, that we are not so modest in our assaults upon God, we attacque him in all his concerns (as far as our feeble malice can reach) in his Soveraignty, in his honour, in his relatives; nay, sometimes in his very essence and being. And as they are universal in respect of him, so also in regard of our selves: we engage all our powers in this war, do not only *yield* (as the Apostle speaks) *our members instruments of unrighteousness*, Rom. 6. 18. but we presse them

them upon the ſervice of ſenſual and vile luſts, even beyond our native propenſions. Nor are onely the members of our body, but the faculties of our ſouls alſo thus employed: our underſtandings are buſied firſt in contriving ſins, and then excuſes and diſguiſes for them; our wills are yet more ſturdy rebels, and when the underſtanding is beat out of all its out-works, yet ſullenly keep their hold in ſpight of all conviction; and our affections madly rush on *like the horſe into the battel*, Jerem. 8. 6. deterred by nothing of danger, ſo there be but ſin enough in the attempt.

7. And now with what face can people that thus purſue an hoſtility, expect that it ſhould not be returned to them? Does any man denounce war and yet expect from his adverſary all the careſſes, the obligements of friendſhip? Self-defence will prompt even the meekeſt nature to deſpoil his enemy at leaſt of thoſe things which he uſes to his annoiance; and if God ſhould give way even to that loweſt degree of anger, where or what were we? For ſince we employ our whole ſelves againſt him, nothing but deſtruction can avert our injuries. But 't is happy for us we have to do with one who cannot fear us, who knows the impotence of our wild attempts, and ſo allayes his reſentment of our inſolence, with his pity of our follies. Were it not for this,

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we should not be left in a possibility so often iterate our provocations. Every wicked imagination and black design, would be at once defeated and punisht by infatuation and frenzy: every blasphemous Atheistical speech would whither the tongue like that *arm of Jeroboam* which he stretcht against the Prophet, 1 Kings 13. 4. and every impious act would like the prohibited retrospect of *Lots* Wife, fix us perpetual monuments of divine vengeance.

8. And then how much do we owe to the mercy and commiseration of our God, that *he suffer not his whole displeasure to arise*, Psalm 78. 38. that he abates any thing of that just severity he might use towards us? He that is condemned to the Gallows, would think it a mercy to scape with any inferior penalty: why have we then such mean thoughts of Gods Clemency, when he descends to such low compositions with us, corrects us so lightly, as if 't were only matter of ceremony and punctilio, the regard of his honour, rather then the execution of his wrath? For alace, let him among us that is the most innocent, and undeservedly afflicted, muster up his sins and sufferings, and he will see a vast inequality: and (had he not other grounds of assurance) would be almost tempted to think those were not the provoking cause, they are so unproportionably answered. He sins innumerable

ble instances, and is punisht in few; he sins habitually and perpetually, and suffers rarely and seldom: nay, perhaps he has sometimes sinned with greediness, and yet God has punisht with regret and reluctancy, *How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim?* Hos. 11. 8. And when all these disparities are considered, we must certainly joyn heartily in *Ezras* confession, *Thou, O God, has punisht us less then our iniquities deserve*, Ezra 9. 13.

9. Nay, besides all our antecedent, we have after guilts no less provoking, I mean our ungracious repinings at the light chastisements of our former sins, our out-cryes upon every little uneasiness, which may justly cause God to turn our whips into scorpions: and according as he threatned *Israel*, Lev. 26. 18. *to punish us yet seven times more*. And yet even this does not immediately exasperate him. The *Iews* were an instance how long he could bear with a murmuring generation, but certainly we of this nation are a greater: *yet let us not be high-minded but fear*, Rom. 11. 20. for we see at last the doom fell heavy though it was protracted: a succession of miraculous judgements pursued those murmurers, so that not one of them entered *Canaan*. And 't is very observable that whereas to other sins Gods denunciations are in Scripture conditional and reversible; this was absolute and bound with an oath, *He sware in his wrath that*

that they should not enter into his rest, Psal. 95. 11. And yet if we compare the hardships of the *Israelites* in the wilderness with most of our sufferings, we shall be forced, to confess our mutinies have less temptation, and consequently less excuse. From whence 't is very reasonable to infer, as the greatness of our danger if we persist, so the greatness of God's long-suffering towards us, who yet allows us space to reform: and sure new complaints sound very ill from us, who are lyable to so severe an account for our old ones. I fear the most resigned persons of us will upon recollection find, they have upon one occasion or other out-vied the number of the *Israelites* murmures: therefore unless we will emulate them in their plagues, let us fear to add one more, lest that make up the fatal sum, and render our destruction irrevocable.

10. Upon all these considerations it appears, how little reason any of us have to repine at our heaviest pressures; but there is yet a farther circumstance to be adverted to and is too applicable to many of us, that is, that our sins are not only the constant meritorious cause of our sufferings, but they are also very often the instrumental cause also; and produce them not only by way of retaliation from God, but by a natural efficacy. *Solomon* tells us he that *loves Pleasure shall be a poor man*, and that *a whorish woman will bring a man to*

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a piece of bread, Pro. 6. 26. *that he that sits long at the wine shall have redness of eyes*, Chap. 23. 29, 30. *that the sloathful soul shall suffer hunger*, 19, 15. and all these not by immediate supernatural infliction from God, but as the proper genuine effects of those respective vices. Indeed God in his original establishment of things, has made so close a connexion between sin and punishment, that he is not often put to exert his power in any extraordinary way, but may trust us to be our own Lectors, our own *back-slidings reprove us*, Jer. 2. 19. *and our iniquities are* of themselves enough to *become our ruine*, Exek. 18. 30. Ezekiel. 18. 30.

11. It may therefore be a seasonable question for every man to put to himself, whether the troubles he labours under be not of this sort; whether the poverty he complains of, be not the effect of his riot and profusion, his sloath and negligence? whether when he cries out that *his comeliness is turned into corruption*, Dan. 10. 8. he may not answer himself, that they are his visits to the harlots houses, which have thus made *rottenness enter into his bones*, Hab. 3. 16. whether when he is beset with contentions, and has wounds without cause, *he have not tarried long at the wine*; when he has lost his friend, whether he have not by some *treacherous wound*, Eccles. 22. 22. forced him to depart: or when he lies under infamy, whether it be not onely the

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Echo of his own ſcandalous crimes. If he find it thus with him, certainly his mouth is ſtopt, and he cannot without the moſt deſingenuous impudence complain of any but himſelf. He could not be ignorant that ſuch effects did naturally attend ſuch cauſes, and therefore if he would take the one, he muſt take the other alſo. No man ſure can be ſo mad, as to think God ſhould work miracles (diſunite thoſe things which nature hath conjoyned) only that he may ſin at eaſe, have all the beſtial pleaſures he can project, and none of the conſequent ſmart. We read indeed God divided the ſea, but it was to make *the way for the ranſomed of the Lord to paſs over*, Iſai. 51. 10. thoſe who were his own people, and went in at his command; but when they were ſecured, we find the waters immediately returned to their channel, and overwhelmed the Egyptians, who ventured without the ſame warrant. And ſure the cauſe is alike here, when any man can produce Gods mandate for him to run into all exceſs of riot, to deſecrate the Temple of the holy Ghoſt, *and make his body the member of an harlot*, 1 Corinth. 6. 15. in a word when God bids him do any of thoſe things, which God and good men abhor, then and not before he may hope he may ſever ſuch acts from their native penal effects: for till then (how profuſe ſoever ſome Legendary ſtories repreſent him) he will certainly never ſo beſtow his miracles.

12. But

12. But I fear upon ſcrutiny there will appear a yet farther circumſtance upon which to arraign our mutinies: for though it be unreaſonable enough to charge God with the ill effects of our own lewdneſs, yet 't is a higher ſtep to murmur, becauſe we have not materials to be wicked enough. And this I fear is the caſe with too many of us, who though they are not ſo deſpoiled by their ſins, but that they can keep up their round of vicious pleaſures, yet are diſcontented, becauſe they think ſome others have them more exquiſite, think their vices are not Gentile enough, unleſs they be very expenſive, and are covetous only that they may be more Luxurious. Theſe are ſuch as St. *James* ſpeaks of, *who ask amiſs, that they may conſume it upon their luſts*, James 4. 3. and ſure to be mutinous on this account is one of the higheſt pieces of frenzy. Would any man in his wits tell another he will cut his throat, and then expect he ſhould furniſh him with a knife for it? And yet to this amount our murmurs againſt God, for his not giving us thoſe things wherewith we only deſign to wage war with him. For ſurely if the diſcontents of mankind were cloſely inſpected, I doubt a great many would be found of this kind. It concerns the Reader therefore to make the inquiſition in his own breaſt, both in this and all the former particulars; and I doubt not, if he do it with any ingenuity and uprightneſs,

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he will be abundantly convinced that for his few mites of obedience he payes to God, he receives talents of mercies (even temporal) from him: and that on the other side, that God as much underpayes his sins, as he overpayes his services: by which God does sufficiently attest how little he delights in our affliction, how gladly he takes an light occasion of caressing and cherishing, and overskips those of punishing us. Which sure ought to make us convert all our displeasures against our sins, which extort those acts of severity from him, to which his nature is most averse. And here indeed our resentments cannot be too sharp, but towards God our fittest address will be in the penitential form of the Prophet Daniel, *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, but to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesse, though we have rebelled against him*, Dan. 9.8,9. And as his justice is to be revered in his inflictions, so is his wisdom also, in so disposing of events to particular persons, as may best consist with the universal Oeconomy and managery of the World, the consideration whereof is the design of the next Section.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

Of Gods general Providence.

1. WHen God made the universe, he intended not only to glorifie himself in one transient act of his power, and then leave this great and wonderful production of his, as the *Ostrich her eggs* in the wilderness, Lam. 4. 3. but having drawn it out of its first Chaos, he secured it from returning thither again, by establishing as a due symmetry of parts, so also a regular order of motion. Hence it is that the Heavens have their constant revolutions, the Earth its succession of determinate seasons, animals their alternate course of generation and corruption: and by this wise Oeconomy, the World after so many thousand years, seems still in its spring and first beauty. But it had been in vain to have this secur'd the defection of the creatures, if man for whose sake they were made had been excluded from this care. His faculty of reason would have made him but the more fatal instrument of confusion, and taught him the more compendious wayes of disturbing the world. *Job* compares him *to the wild asses colt*, Job 11. 12. which takes its range without adverting to any thing of the common good.

God

God has therefore doubly hedged in this unruly creature, made a fence of laws about him (both natural and positive) and besides has taken him into the common circle of his providence, so that he, as well as the rest of the creation, has his particular station assigned him and that not only in reference to other creatures, but himself; has put a difference between one man and another, ordained several ranks and Classes of men, and endowed them with special and appropriate qualifications for those stations wherein he has set them.

2. This, as it is a work of infinite wisdom in God, so it is of unspeakable advantage to men. Without this regular disposure, the world would have been in the same confusion which we read of in the host of the *Midianites, every mans sword against his fellow.* Jud. 7.22. Nothing but force could determine who should do, or enjoy any thing; and even that decision also would have been repelable by a greater force: so that we have all reason to confess the utility of that order God has set among men: and even he that bears the lowest and most despicable place in it, is certainly infinitely more happy by contributing to that general Harmony, then he could be in any state of discord.

3. Were this now well considered, me thinks it should silence all our complaints, and

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men should not be so vehemently concerned in what part of the structure it pleases the great Architect to put them: for every man is to look on himself, only as a small parcel of those materials which God is to put into form. Every stone is not fit for the corner, nor every little rafter for the main beam: the wisdom of the Master builder is alone to determine that. And sure there cannot be a more vile contempt of the divine wisdome then to dispute his choice. Had God wisdome enough to contrive this vast and beautiful fabrick, and may he not be trusted with one of us poor worms? Did he by his *wisdom make the heavens, and by his understanding stretch out the clouds*, Prov. 3. 19. and shall he not know where to place a little lump of figured earth? This is certainly the most absurd distrust imaginable, and yet this is really the true meaning of our repining at the condition he has placed us in.

4. The truth is, we are so full of our selves, that we can see nothing beyond it, every man expects God should place him where he has mind to be, though by it he discompose the whole scheme of his providence. But though we are so senselessly partial, yet God is not so: he that comprehends at once the whole concern of mankind, applies himself to the accommodating those, not the humoring any particular person. *He has made the great and the*

small, and careth for all alike, Wisd.6.7. He is the common father of mankind, and disposes things for the publick advantage of this great family, and 't is not all the impatient cravings of a froward child that shall make him recede from his design'd method. We are apt enough, I am sure, to tax it not only as a weakness, but injustice too in a Prince, when he indulges any thing to a private favorite to the publick disadvantage; yet so unequal are we, that we murmur at God for not doing that, which we murmur at men for doing.

5. Besides a man is to consider, that other men have the same appetites with himself. If he dislike an inferior state, why should he not think others do so too? and then as the wise man speaks, *whose voice shall the Lord hear?* Eccles. 34.24. 'T is sure great insolence in me, to expect that God should be more concern'd to humor me, then those multitudes of others, who have the same desires. And the more impatient my longings are, the less in reason should be my hopes: for impatience is no such endearing quality as to render any man a darling to God. But if all men should have equal satisfactions, we should puzle even omnipotence it self. Every man would be above and superior; yet those are comparative terms, and if no man were below, no man could be above. So in wealth, most men desire more, but every man does at least desire to keep

what he has; how then shall one part of the World be supplied without the diminution of the other, unless there should be as miraculous a multiplication of treasure for mens avarice, as there was of Loaves for their hunger. Matth. 16.9. It was a good answer which the Ambassadors of an oppress Province made to *Amoxy*, If, O Emperor, thou wilt have double taxes from us, thou must help us to double Springs and Harvests. And sure God must be at the expence of a new Creation, make us a double World, if he should oblige himself to satisfy all the unreasonable appetites of men: and if he satisfy not all, why should any particular person look that his alone should be indulged to?

6. Yet as unreasonable as it is, the most of us do betray such a perswasion. No man is discontented that there are lower, as well as higher degrees in the World, that there are poor as well as rich, but all sensible men assent to the fitness of it: yet if themselves happen to be set in the lower form, they exclaim as if the whole order of the World were subverted: which is a palpable indication that they think that Providence which governs others, should serve them, and distribute to them not what it, but themselves think good. This immoderate self-love is the spring and root of most of our complaints, makes us such unequal judges in our own concerns, and prompts

us to put in Caveats and exceptions on our own behalf, as *David* did on his sons, *See that thou hurt not the young man Absolom*: 2 Sam. 18. 15. as if God were to manage the government of the World with a particular regard to our liking, and were like the Angels at *Sodom*, Genes. 19. 22. to *do nothing till we had got into Zoar*, had all our demands secured to us.

7. It would indeed astonish a considering man to see, that although the concerns of men are all disposed by an unerring Wisdom, and acknowledged by themselves to be so yet that scarce any man is pleased. The truth is, we have generally in us the worser part of the Levellers principle, and though we can very contentedly behold multitudes below us, yet are impatient to see any above us; not only *the foot* (to use the Apostles simile) *complains that it is not the hand, but the ear because it is not the eye*, 1 Corint. 12. 15, 16. Not only the lowermost, but the higher ranks of men are uneasy if there be any one step above them. Nay, so importunate is this aspiring humor, that we see men are forced to feed it, though but with air and shadows. He that cannot make any real advance in his quality, will yet do it in effigie, in all little gaieties and pageantries of it. Every degree in these respects not only emulates but imitates its superior, till it clash by that impatience of their proper distance

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they make it greater, and sink even below their first state by their ridiculous profusion. Indeed the world seems to be so over-run with this vanity, that there is little visible distinction of degrees, and one had need go to the Heralds office to know mens qualities, for neither their habit nor equipage do now adayes inform us with any certainty.

8. But by all these it appears that men look on themselves only as single persons, without reference to the community whereof they are members. For did they consider that, they would endeavour rather to become the places wherein they were set, by doing the duties belonging to them, then be perpetually projecting for a change. A tree that is every year transplanted will never bear fruit, and a mind that is alwayes hurried from its proper station, will scarce ever do good in any. This excellently expresst to us by *Solomon*, *As a bird that wandereth from his nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place*, Prov. 27.8. 'T is easy to divine the fate of those young ones from whom the dame wanders, and 't is as easy to guess how the duties of that place will be performed, whose owner is alwayes upon the wing and making towards another. I wish we had not too costly experiments both in Church and State of the truth of this observation. Alace, we forget that we are all servants to the same Master, and that he is to ap-

point in what office we shall serve him. How should we like it in any of our own families, to have an inferior officer leave his work undone, because he has more mind to be Major-Domo? Yet this insolence we every day repete towards God, sullenly dispute his orders, and unless we may chuse our own employments, will do nothing.

9. 'T is evident this perverse temper of mankind breeds a great deal of mischief and disturbance in the World, but would breed arrant confusion & subversion, if it were suffered to have its full range. If God permit but one ambitious spirit to break loose in an age as the instrument of his wrath, what destruction does it often-times make? How does it *cause the whole earth to tremble, and shake Kingdoms*, as is said of *Nebuchadnezzar*, Isai. 14. 16. and may be said of many others of those whole-sale robbers who have dignified the trade? But if every aspiring humour should be as prosperous, where would it find fuel to maintain the flame? No doubt every age produces men of as unbounded desires as *Alexander* or *Cesar*, but God gives them not the same opportunities to trouble the World. And accordingly in the more petty ambitions of private men he often orders it so, that those soaring minds can find no benign gale to help their mounting. He that set abounds to the sea, saying, *hitherto shalt thou come and no further*,

ther, and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail, though they roar yet can they not pass over, Jerem. 5. 22. does also depress the swelling pride of men, hangs clogs and weights upon them that they cannot rise to their affected height. For though we are all willing to forget it, yet God remembers that he is the Rector of the Universe, and will assert his Dominion. The subtilest contrivance cannot circumvent him, the most daring pretender cannot arrest any thing out of his hand, the *Lord will still be King, tho the people never so impatient*, Psalm 99. 1. 'T will therefore sure be as well our prudence as our duty to *be still, and know that he is God*, Psalm 46. 10. with an humble derelict on of our own wills acquiesce in his, and not by ineffective strugglings provoke, whom we are sure never to subdue. We may like unmanaged horses fome and fret, but still God has the bridle in our jawes, and we cannot advance a step farther then he permits us. Why should we then create torment to our selves by our repinings, which onely sets us farther from our aims. 'T is Gods declared method to exalt the lowly, and 't is observable in the first two Kings of *Israel* who were of Gods immediate election, that he surprised them with that dignity when they were about mean and humble employments, the one searching his fathers Asses, the other

keeping his fathers sheep: and would men honestly and diligently exercise themselves in the business of their proper calling, they might perhaps find it a more direct road to advancement, then all the sinister arts by which ambitious men endeavour to climb. *Solomon* sets it down as an Aphorism, *seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before Kings, he shall not stand before mean men*, Prov. 22. 29. But whether it happen to have that effect or no, it will have a better; for it will sweeten his present condition, divert his mind from murmurous reflections on other mens height, and his own lowness, for 't is commonly men who mind not their work that are at so much leisure to gaze. He that carefully plies his own business will have his thoughts more concentred. And doubtless 't is no small happiness to have them so, for 't is their gadding too much abroad, looking on other mens conditions, that sends them back (like *Dinah* dishowred) to put all in an uproar at home. The son of *Syrah* speaks with transportation of the state even of him that labours and is content, and calls it a *sweet life*, Eccles. 40. 18. And certainly 't is infinitely more so then that of the greatest Prince whose mind swells beyond his territories.

10. Upon all these considerations it cannot but appear very reasonable that we should leave

leave God to govern the World, not be putting in like the sons of *Zebedee* for the highest seats; but contentedly rest our selves where he has placed us, till his providence (not our own designs) advance us. We can no where be so obscure as to be hid from his eyes; who as he valued the widows mite above the great oblations of the rich, so he will no less graciously accept the humble endeavours of the mean, then the more eminent services of the mighty; himself having declared, that he accepts *according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*, 2 Cor. 8. 12. so that in what rank soever a man is set, he has still the same opportunity of approving himself to God: and though in the eye of the World he be a vessel of dishonor, yet in the day when God comes to *make up his Jewels*, Mal. 3. 17. there will be another estimate made of him who regularly moves in his own sphere. And sure he that sits down in this acquiescence is a happier man, then he that enjoys the greatest worldly splendor: but infinitly more so then he who impatiently covets but cannot attain them; for such a man puts himself upon a perpetual rack, keeps his appetites up at the utmost stretch, and yet has nothing wherewith to satisfie them. Let therefore our ease if not our duty prompt us to acquiescence, and a ready submission to Gods disposalls, to which we have yet a farther inducement from that

distinct care he hath over every mans peculiar, by which he proportions to him what is really best for him; of which we are farther to consider in the next Section.

SECT. VII.

Of Gods particular Providence.

1. IT is the imperfection of our finite nature that we cannot at once attend to divers things, but the more vehement our intention is upon one, the greater is our neglect of the rest. But Gods infinity cannot be bounded; his eyes at once see, and his providence at once orders all the most distant and disparate things in the World. He is not such an Epicurean Deity, as to sequester himself wholly to the enjoyment of his own felicity, and to despise the concerns of poor mortals; but though he have his *dwelling so high, yet he humbleth himself to behold the things in heaven and earth*, Psalm 113. 5. Nor does his providence confine it self to the more splendid and greater parts of managery, the conduct of Empires and States, but it descends to the lowest parts of his creation, to the *fowls* of the air, to the *lilies* of the field, and then sure our Saviours inference as to mankind is irrefragable, *Are ye not much better then they?* Matth. 6. 26. If a Sparrow (as he elsewhere tells

tells his disciples) can not fall to the ground without Gods particular notice, surely no humane creature is less considerable to him; nay, if our very hairs are numbred, we cannot think the excrescence is of more value then the stock, but must conclude that God with a particular advertence watches over the concerns of every man.

2. Now God being infinitly good, cannot thus attend us upon any infidious design of doing us mischief: he watches over us as a guardian, not as a spy; and directs his observation to the more seasonable adapting his benefits. And as he is thus gracious in designing our advantage, so he is no less wise in contriving it. All things says the *Wise man are not profitable for all men*, Eccl. 37. 28. Indeed nothing is absolutly good but God; all created things are good or ill in reference to that to which they are applyed. Meat is good, but to a surfeited stomach 't is not only nauseous but dangerous. Fire is good, but if put in our bosoms, not onely burns our cloaths but flesh. And as humane wisdom directs the right application of these and the like, so the supreme and divine orders events according to the disposition of the person concerned; *he knows our frame*, Psalm 103. 14. and discerns what operation such or such things will have upon us, while we who know neither our selves nor them, can make but random

gueſſes, and worſe choices. And ſure he that does but this in the general acknowledge Gods providence, goodneſs and wiſdome (which he is no Chriſtian who does not) has a ſufficient amulet againſt all his ſollicitudes, much more his repinings. He cannot think he ſuffers unawares to him who ſees all things. He cannot think his ſufferings are deſigned for ill to him, becauſe they are diſpoſed by him who intends and projects his good. Nor can he fear thoſe intentions can miſcarry, which are guided by an infinite and unerring wiſdom, and backt by an uncontrolable power. And ſure this is as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, Heb. 6. 18. *ſtrong conſolation*, if we would but duly apply it.

3. Yet becauſe general notions do often make but light impreſſions on us, it may not be anuis to make a little more inſpection, and to obſerve how applicable they are to the ſeveral kinds of our diſcontents. Now thoſe may be reduced to two: for either we are troubled at the want of ſomething we deſire, or at the ſuffering of ſomething we would avert; ſo that the two notions of privative and poſitive, divide between them all our affliction.

4. The firſt of theſe is uſually the moſt comprehenſive, for there are few who have not more torment from the apprehenſion of ſomewhat they want, then from the ſmart of

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ny thing they feel. And indeed whilst our desires are so vagrant and exorbitant, they will be sure to furnish matter enough for our discontents. But certainly there is not in the World such a charm for them, as the consideration that God is more wise to discern, and more careful to provide what is really good for us then we our selves. We poor pure-blind creatures look onely on the surface of things, and if we see a beautiful appearance, somewhat that invites our senses, we court it with the utmost earnestness; but God penetrates deeper, he sees to the bottom both of us and those things we desire, and finds often that though they may please our appetite, they will hurt our health: and will no more give them to us, then a careful father will to his child those gilded poisons he cries for. Perhaps this man is taken with the enchanting musick of fame, likes not his own obscure station, but would fain present himself upon a more publick Theater, come into the eye and croud of the World; but how little does he know how he shall act his part there: whether he shall come off with a plaudite or a hiss; He may render himself but the more publick spectacle of scorn, or if he do not that, he may by a better success feed up his vain glory, to such a bulk, as may render him too great a weight for that tottering pinnacle whereon he stands: and so after he has made

a towring circle, he may fall back with more ignominy to his first point. Another it may be no less eagerly desires wealth, thinks (as once *Cræsus* did) that he that abounds in treasure cannot be empty of felicity; but alace, how knows he how he shall employ it? There are two contrary temptations that attend riches, riots, and covetousness: and he is sure a little too confident, that dares promise himself that when there is such odds against him, he shall certainly chuse the one just mean: and if he do not, he does only inflame his account at the great Audit. Besides, the more wealth he has, the fairer booty he is to the avarice of others, and it has been often seen, that many a man had not died so poor, if he had lived less rich. Another perhaps thinks not himself so much to want wealth as children to heir it, and complains with *Abraham*, *Lord what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?* Genes. 15. 2. yet how knows he whether that child he so much desires *shall be a wise man or a fool*, Eccles. 2. 19. a comfort or a vexation to himself if he live to see his proof? and if he do not, he does but project for an access to his dying cares in what hands to leave him. *Rachel* sollicited this satisfaction with the greatest impatience, *give me children or I die*, Genes. 30. 2. and 'tis observable, that the grant of her wish proved the loss of her life.

5. Thus

5. Thus in these and innumerable other instances we drive on blind-fold, and very often impetuously pursue that which would ruine us: and were God as short-sighted as we, into what precipices should we minutely hurry our selves? or were he so unkind as to consider our importunity more then our interest, we should quickly sink under the weight of our own wishes; and as *Juvenal* in his tenth Satyr excellently observes, perish by the success and grant of our Prayers. I suppose there is no man that soberly recollects the events of his life, but can experimentally say, he has sometimes desired things which would have been to his mischief if he had had them, and that himself has after look'd on the denial as a mercy: as on the other side when he has prospered in his aims, and had what his soul lusted after, it has been but like the quails to the *Israelites*, a conviction and punishment, rather then a satisfaction. And now surely God may complain of us as he did of *Israel*, *How long will it be ere you believe me?* Numb. 14. 11. After all the attestations he has given of his care and Providence over us, after all the experiment we have had of the folly of our own elections, we cannot yet be brought either to distrust our selves, or rely upon him. We will still be chusing, and look on him as no farther concerned, then as the executioner of our designs.

6. This

6. This is certainly a ſtrange perverſeneſs, and ſuch as no ſenſible man would be guilty of in any other inſtance. In all our ſecular affairs, we truſt thoſe whom we have cauſe to think underſtand them better then our ſelves, and rely upon men in their own faculty. We put our eſtates in the Lawyers hand, our bodies into the Phyſicians, and ſubmit to their advice though it be againſt our humour, meerly becauſe we account them more competent judges. Yet this deference we cannot be perſwaded to pay to God, but will ſtill be preſcribing to him, and are very angry if his diſpenſations do not exactly anſwer our fancies. And can we offer him a greater affront then thus to diſtruſt him? What is it but interpretatively to deny either his wiſdom, or his goodneſs, or both? and ſo derogate from him in two of his eſſential attributes. For there can be no rational account given by any who believe thoſe, why they ſhould not remit their whole concerns to him. So that the ſhort account is, that in our diſtruſts we either deny him to be God, or our ſelves to be men, by reſiſting the moſt evident dictates of that reaſon which diſtinguiſhes us from brutes. For certainly there is not in humane diſcourſe a more irrefragable Maxime, then that we ought for our own ſakes to reſign our ſelves to him, who we are infallibly ſure, can, & will chuſe better for us, then we for our ſelves.

7. This

7. This was so apparent by meer natural light, that *Socrates* advised men to pray onely for blessings in general, and leave the particular kinds of them to Gods election, who best knows what is good for us. And sure this is such a piece of divinity, as extremely reproaches us Christians, who cannot match a Heathen in his implicite faith to God. Nay, indeed 'tis the vilest defamation upon God himself, that we who pretend to know him more, should trust him less. So that we see our repinings do not terminate in their own proper guilt, but do in their consequences swell higher, and our discontents propagate themselves into Blasphemy. For while we impatiently complain of our wants, we do tacitly tax God to want either that wisdom, power, or love, whereby he should supply us. And sure he must be very Atheistical to whom this will not give a competent prejudice against this sin.

8. And this very consideration will equally prejudge the other branch of our discontents, I mean those which repine at the ills we suffer. And not onely our privative, but our positive afflictions may by it have their bitterness taken off: for the same goodness and wisdom which denies those things we like, because they are hurtful for us, does upon the very same reason give us those distastful things which he sees profitable. A wise Physician

ſician does not only dyet, but it occaſion be, purge his patient alſo. And ſurely there is not ſuch a purifier, ſuch a cleanſer of the ſoul as are afflictions, if we do not (like diſorderly patients) fruſtrate their efficacy by the irregular managery of our ſelves under them.

SECT. VIII.

Of the Advantage of Affliction.

1. IT were the work of a volume to give an exact and minute account of the benefit of affliction. I ſhall only point at ſome of the more general and obvious. And firſt it is one of the moſt awakening calls to repentance: and to this end it is that God moſt uſually deſigns it. We ſee the whole ſcene of it, Hoſ. 5. 15. *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and ſeek my face: in their affliction they will ſeek me early*: and in the very next Verſe we find this voyce of God echoed forth by a penitential note, *Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us, he hath ſmitten, and he will bind us up.* Thus we find the Brethren of *Joſeph*, though there had a long interval paſſed betwixt their barbarous uſage of him, and his feigned rigor to them, yet when they ſaw themſelves diſtreſſed by the one, then they begin to recollect the other, ſaying, *We*

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are verily guilty concerning our brother, Genes. 42. 21. Prosperity is an intoxicating thing, and there are few brains strong enough to bear it; it layes us a sleep, and amuses us with pleasant dreams, whilst in the mean time *Satan* rifles our treasures, and spoils us by the deceitful charms of sin, of our innocency and real happiness. And can there be a more friendly office done for a man, in this condition, than to rouze him, and bring him to apprehend the designs that are laid against him? And this is the errand on which afflictions are sent: so that we have reason to look on them as our friends and confederates that intend our rescue, and to take the alarm they give us, and diligently seek out those intestine enemies of which they warn us. And he that instead of this, quarrels at their interposing, thinks them his *enemies because they tell him the truth*, Galat. 4. 6. Does miserably pervert *the counsel of God against himself*, Luke 7. 30. and may at last verify his own jealousies; and by so provoking an ingratitude, convert those into the wounds of an enemy, which were originally meant as the corrections of a Father.

2. And as afflictions do thus in general admonish us of sins, so it pleases God most frequently so to model and frame them, that they bear the very image and impress of those

those particular guilts they are to chastise, and are the dark shadows that attend our gay delights, or flagrant insolencies. The wise man observes that the turning the Egyptian waters into blood, was a manifest reproof of that cruel commandment for the murdering of the Hebrew Infants, Wisdom. 12. 5. And surely we might in most if not all our sufferings, see some such corresponding circumstances, as may lead us to the immediate provoking cause of it. God who does all things in number, weight, and measure, does in punishments also observe a symmetry and proportion, and adapts them not only to the heinousness, but even the very specific kind of our crimes. The only fixt immutable rule he has given for his Vice-gerents on Earth to punish by, is that in the case of murder, which is we see grounded on this rule of proportion, *He that sheddeth mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, Gen. 9. 6. And though he have now rescinded the inferior retaliations of the *eye for the eye, the tooth for the tooth*, Exod. 21. 24. (probably for the hardness of our hearts, because he saw our revengeful natures would be too much pleased with it) yet he has not precluded himself from acting by those measures, but we see he does very often signally make men feel the smart of those violencies or injustices they have used to others. Of this the Sacred story affords several examples (as *Adonibezek*,

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Judg. 1. 6. and *Ahab*, 1 Kings 21. 19.) and and profane many more, and daily experience and observation most of all. And though this method of retaliation is not always so evident and apparent to the world, because mens sins are not always so, yet I believe if men would duly recollect, it would be for the most part discernable to their own consciences, and they would apparently see, that their calamities did but trace the foot-steps of their sins.

3. Now if we rightly weigh this, we cannot but think it a very advantageous circumstance. We are naturally blind when we look inward, and if we have not some adventitious light to clear the object, will be very apt to overlook it. Therefore since the end of all our afflictions is our repentance, it is a wise and gracious disposal, that they do thus point to us those particular sins of which we are to repent. The body of sin will not be destroyed in the whole entire bulk, but must be dismembred, pulled to pieces limb by limb. He that attaques it otherwise will be like *Sextus*'s soldier, who ineffectively tugged at the horses tail to get it off at once, when he that pull'd it hair by hair, quickly did it. Therefore as it is a great part of our spiritual wisdom to know in what special parts the strength of our corruptions lie, so it is a great instance of Gods care of us, thus

thus by his corrections to discipline and instruct us in it.

4. In all our afflictions therefore it is our concern, nicely and critically to observe them. I mean, not to enhance our murmurs and complaints, but to learn by them what is God's peculiar controversy against us. This is indeed *to hear the rod, and who hath appointed it*, Mic. 6. 9. Let him therefore that suffers in any of his concerns, examine whether he have not some corresponding guilt which answers to it, *as face answers face*, Prov. 27. 19. he that is impoverished in his estate, let him consider first how he acquired it, whether there were not something of fraud or injustice, which like a cancerous humor, lurkt in its very elements and constitution, and eat out its bowels: or whether some sacrilegious prize, some coal from the altar have not fired his nest. Or if nothing can be charged upon the acquest, let him consider how he has used it, whether he have not made it the fuel of his lusts, in riot and excesses, or the object of his adoration in an inordinate value of it. In like manner he who is afflicted in his body, groans under the torment of some grievous disease, may very seasonably interrogate himself, whether it have not been contracted by his vice, whether *his bones be not in a more literal sense then Job meant it, full of the sins of his youth*, Job 20. 11. and his

his surfeiting and drunkenness be not the cause *that his soul*, as the Psalmist speaks, *abhors all manner of meat, and is even hard at deaths door*, Psalm 107. 18. or at least whether the not employing his health & strength to those purposes for which 't was given, is not the reason of its being withdrawn. He also that is invaded in his reputation, tortures under some great infamy, is to consider whether it be not deserved; whether some part, if not the whole guilt, of which he is accused, stick not to him: or if he be clear in that particular instance, whether some concealed sin of his would not if it were known, incur as great scandal: for in that case he has in right forfeited his reputation, and God may make the seizure as well by an unjust, as a just accusation. Or, if his heart accuse him not here, yet let him farther reflect, whether his vain-glorious pursuits of praise and high conceits of himself, have not made this an apt and necessary humiliation for him. Or lastly, let him recollect how he has behaved himself towards others in this kind: whether he have had a just tenderness of his neighbors fame, or have not rather exposed & prostituted it. In these and many other instances such a particular scrutiny, would (in all probability) discover the affinity and cognation between our guilts and our punishments; and by marking out the spring and fountain head, direct us how to stop or divert the current.

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And he that would diligently employ himself in this inquisition, would find little leisure and less cause to condole his afflictions, but would divert all his complaints upon himself, *accept of the punishment of his iniquity: and thank the Lord for thus giving him warning.* Psalm 16. 8.

5. A second benefit which God designs us in our afflictions, is the weaning us from the World, to disentangle us from its fetters and charms, and draw us to himself. We read in the story of the *Deluge*, that so long as the Earth was covered with waters, the very *Raven* was contented to take shelter in the Ark, but when all was fair and dry, even the *Dove* finally forsook it, Genes. 8. 12. And 'tis much so with us: the worst of men will commonly in distresses have recourse to God (the very heathen mariners in a storm could rebuke *Jonah* for not calling upon his God, *Jon.* 1. 6.) when yet the very best of us, are apt to forget him amidst the blandishments and insinuations of prosperity. The kind aspects of the World are very enchanting, apt to inveigle and befot us, and therefore it is Gods care over us, to let us sometimes see her more averring countenance in her frowns and storms: that, as children frighted by some ugly appearance, we may run into the arms of our father. Alace, were all things exactly fitted to our humors here, when should we think

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f a remove? and had not death ſome har-
ingers to prepare us for him, what a ſurpri-
ng gueſt would he be to us? 'T is ſtoried of
Antigonus, that ſeeing a ſoldier in his camp
o daring a courage, that he alwayes cour-
d the moſt hazardous attempts, and obſer-
ing him alſo of a very infirm ſickly habit, he
ook a particular care of him, and by medi-
nes and good attendance recovered him;
hich no ſooner he had done, but the man
ew more cautious, and would no longer ex-
ſe himſelf as formerly; and gave this reaſon
r it, that now he was healthy his life was of
me value to him, and not to be hazard at the
me rate, as when it was only a burden: and
ould God cure all our complaints, render us
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e of the ſoldiers mind, think our lives too
od to reſign to him, much more to hazard
r him, as our Chriſtianity in many caſes
bliges us. The ſon of *Syrach* obſerves how
*readful death is to a man that is at reſt in his
ſſions, that hath abundance of all things,*
d hath nothing to vex him: nay, he deſcends
uch lower, and puts in him *who is yet able
receive meat*, Eccleſ. 14. 1. The truth is we
ſo paſſionately dote upon the World, that
e beſotted lovers, we can bear a great deal
ill uſage, before we quit our purſuit. Any
le ſlight favour atones us after multiplied
ronts, & we muſt be diſciplined by repeted

disappointments, ere we can withdraw our confidence. But how fatally secure should we be, if God should permit this Syren alwayes to entertain us with her musick, and should not by some discordant grating notes interrupt our raptures, and recal us to sober thoughts.

6. Indeed 't is one of the highest instances of Gods love, and of his clemency also, thus to project our reducement. We were all in our Baptism affianc'd to him, with a particular abrenunciation of the World, so that we cannot without the greatest disloyalty cast our selves into its embraces; and yet when we have thus *broken the Covenant of God*, Prov. 2. 17. he does not pursue us with a jealous rage, with the severity which an abused rival'd kindness would suggest; doth not give us a bill of divorce and disclaim his relation; but contrives how he may reclame and bring us back to himself. The transcendency of this lenity God excellently describes by the Prophet in the case of *Israel*, *They say if a man put away his wife, and she become another mans, shall he return unto her again? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me saith the Lord*, Jer. 3. 1. And this though a great hight of indulgence is no more then he daily repetes to us. After we have basely adulterated with the World, converted our affections from God to it, he does not give us over,

bandon us to our leud course, and consequent ruine, but still invites our return; and lest that may not serve, he does with a great deal of holy artifice essay to break that accursed League into which we are entered, pulls off the disguise in which the world courted us, & makes us see it as it is in it self, a scene of *vanity and vexation of Spirit*, Eccles. 1. 14.

6, And as he does this in general, so also with a particular application to those temporal satisfactions wherewith we were most transported: the things to which we are more indifferent do not so much endanger us, 't is those upon which we have more vehemently set our hearts which become our snares, and awake his jealousy; and accordingly we frequently see that 't is in those he chuses to cross us. How often does it happen that those which are enamoured of themselves, dote upon their own features do meet with some disease or accident which blasts their beauty, withers that fair flower, and makes their winter overtake their spring? So in our friends and relations 't is usually seen, we soonest lose those for whom we have the greatest, the most immoderate passion. If there be one fondling among our children, 't is odds but that is taken away, or made as much the object of our grief and sorrow, as ever it was of our joy and love. When God sees our hearts so excessively cleave to any transitory thing,

he knows 't is neceſſary to ſeve're them: for whilſt we have ſuch clogs upon us, *our ſouls will cleave to the duſt*, Pſal. 119. 1. will not be able to ſoar up to the higher region for which they are deſigned.

7. In a word, God ſo loves us, that he removes whatever he ſees will obſtruct that intimate union which he deſires with us: and ſure this is ſo obliging, that though he ſhould bid us to our loſs, though he could not recompence us for what he takes from us, yet we muſt be very ill natured if we can be angry at ſo much kindneſs. But when to this is added that all this is principally, nay ſolely deſigned for our advantage, that God takes from us all theſe empty deluſary contentments meerly that he may inſtate us in ſolid and durable joyes; we betray as much ignorance of our intereſt, as inſenſibleneſs of our obligation, if we repine that God makes us ſo much his care. 'T is true indeed, the things to which we have ſo inordinatly adhered, do ſtick ſo cloſe, that they cannot be pulled away without ſome pain: yet for our corporal ſecurity we can endure the ſundring of parts that do not onely cleave, but grow to us. He that has a gangren'd member, ſuffers it to be cut of to ſave his whole body; and does not revile, but thank and reward the Chirurgion. Yet where our ſouls are concern'd, and where the things have no native union with us, but

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are onely cemented by our passions, we are impatient of the method, and think God deals very hardly with us, not to let us perish with what we love. The sum of all is this, God though he be abundantly condescending, yet he will never stoop so low as to share his interest in us with the World: if we will devote our selves to it, 'tis not all our empty forms of service will satisfy him: if he cannot divorce our hearts from it, he will divorce himself eternally from us. And the case being thus, we are sure very ill advised if we do not contentedly resign our selves to his methods, and cheerfully endure them how sharp soever. The only expedient we have for our own ease, is to shorten the cure by giving our assistance, and not by struglings to render it more difficult and painful. Let us entirely surrender our wills to him, and when we have done that, we may without much pain let him take any thing else. But the more difficult we find it to be dis-entangled from the World, the greater should our caution be against all future engagements to it. If our escape hath been as the Apostle sayes, *so as by fire*, Jud. 23. with much smart and hazard, let us at least have so much wit as the common proverb allows children, and not again expose our selves: let us never glue our hearts to any external thing, but let all the concerns of the World hang loose about us,

by that means we shall be able to put them off insensibly when ever God calls for them, or perhaps we shall prevent his calling for them at all, it being for the most part, our too close adhesion to them which prompts him to it.

8. A third advantage of afflictions is, that it is a mark and signature of our adoption, a witness of our legitimation. *What son is he* (saith the Apostle) *whom the Father chastiseth not? but if ye be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons*, Hebr. 12. 7, 8. *Jacob* clad his darling *Joseph* in a party-coloured Coat, and Gods favorites do here wear a Livery interwoven with a mixture of dark and gloomy colours, their *long white robes* are laid up for them against they come to the *marriage of the Lamb*, Revel. 19. 7. Indeed we much mistake the design of Christianity, if we think it calls us to a condition of ease and security. It might suit well enough with the votaries of the Golden Calf, to *sit down to eat and drink, and to rise up to play*, Exod. 32. 6. but the Disciples of the crucified Saviour are trained to another discipline, our profession enters us into a state of warfare: and accordingly our very Baptismal engagement runs all in military terms, and we are not onely servants of Christs family, but soldiers of his camp. Now we know in a war men must

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not expect to pass their time in ease and softnesse, but besides all the dangers and difficulties of the combate, have many other hardships to endure; hunger and thirst, heat and cold, hard lodgings, and weary marches: and he that is too nice for those will not long stick to his colours. And it is the same in our spiritual warfare: many pressures and sufferings are annexed to it, and our passive valor is no less tryed then our active. In respect of this it is that our Saviour admonishes his Proselytes to compute first the difficulties incident to their profession, and that he may not ensnare us by proposing too easie terms, he bids us reckon upon the worst, and tells us, that he *that forsakes not all that he hath, shall not be his disciple*, Luke 14. 26. *and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts 14. 22. Indeed 't were very absurd for us to expect easier conditions, when these are the same to which our Leader has submitted, the *Captain of our salvation was perfected by sufferings*, Hebr. 2. 10. *and if it behooved Christ to suffer before he entered into his glory*, Luke 24. 46. it were insolent madness for us to look to be carried thither upon our beds of Ivory, or from the noise of our Harps and Viols be immediatly rapt into the Choire of Angels.

9. This has been so much considered by pious Men, that they have lookt upon their

ſecular proſperities with fear and jealouſie, and many have ſolemnly petition'd for croſſes, as thinking them the neceſſary atteſtation of their ſon-ſhip, and means of aſſimulation to their elder brother. Why then ſhould that which was ſo deſirable to them, appear ſo formidable to us? or why ſhould we ſo vehemently deprecate, what they ſo earneſtly invited? If we indeed think it a priviledge to be the ſons of God, and fellow-heirs with Chriſt, why do we grudge at the condition? The Roman Captain tells St. *Paul*, that he obtained the immunities of a Roman *with a great ſum*, Acts 22.28. and ſhall we expect ſo much a nobler and more advantageous adoption perfectly *gratis*? look that God ſhould change his whole œconomy of our eaſe, give us an eternal Inheritance diſcharged of thoſe temporal incumbrances himſelf has annexed to it. This were ſure as unjuſt a hope as it would be a vain one. When *David* had that enſnaring propoſal made him of being the Kings ſon in law, 1 Sam. 18. 21. he ſet ſuch a value upon the dignity, that he deſpiſed the difficulty of the condition: and ſure we muſt have very low abject ſouls, if when ſo infinitly a higher advancement is ſincerely offered us, we can ſuffer any apprehenſion of hardſhip to divert us. In a word, let us remember that of the Apoſtle, *if we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him*, 2 Tim. 2. 12. And though our

our afflictions be in themselves not joious but grievous, yet when they are considered as the earnest of our future Inheritance, they put on another face, and may rather enamour then fright us.

10. A fourth advantage of affliction is, that they excite our compassions towards others: there is nothing qualifies us so rightly to estimate the suffering of others, as the having our selves felt them: without this our apprehensions of them are as dull and confused, as a blind man's of colours, or a deaf man's of sounds. They that *stretch themselves upon their couches, that eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall: that chaunt to the sound of the viol, drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, will not much be grieved with the afflictions of Joseph*, Amos 6. 4. Nay, so necessary is our experience towards our commiseration, that we see 't was thought a requisite accomplishment of our High Priest (that highest example of unbounded compassion,) and therefore saith the Apostle, *It behooved him in all things to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able also to succour them that are tempted*, Hebr. 2. 17, 18. But if he whose meer sense of our mi-

ſeries brought him down to us, choſe this expedient to advance his pity, how neceſſary is it to our petrified bowels? And ſince God has aſſigned our mercies to our Brethren, as the ſtandard by which he will proportion his to us, 'tis more ours then their advantage to have them inlarged: ſo that when by making us taſte of their Cup, acquainting us with the bitter reliſh of their ſufferings, he prepares us to a Chriſtian ſympathy with them, 't is but a remoter way of obliging and qualifying us for a more ample portion of his mercy. Nay, beſides the profit, there is honour accrues to us by it; compaſſion is one of the beſt properties of our nature, and we unman our ſelves when we put it off; nay more, 't is an attribute of the Divinity, and the more we advance in it, the cloſer approaches we make to him. And therefore we have all reaſon to bleſs him for that diſcipline by which he promotes us in ſo excellent, ſo neceſſary a Grace.

11. A fifth benefit of afflictions is, that it is an improvement of Devotion, ſets us with more heartineſs to our Prayers. Whil'ſt proſperity flows in upon us we bath our ſelves in its ſtreams, but are very apt to forget its ſource; ſo that God is fain to ſtop the current, leave us dry and parched that our needs may make us do what our gratitude would not, trace our bleſſings up to the original

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Spring, and both acknowledge and invoke him as the Author of all our good. This effect of Afflictions is observed by the Prophet, *Lord in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastning was upon them,* Isai. 26. 16. And I believe I may appeal to every Mans experience, whether his prayers be not more frequent, and more hearty too, when he is under some distress. Then how importunate are we in our petitions? how profuse in our vows and promises? saying with Israel, *Deliver us only we pray thee this day: and they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord,* Jud. 10. 15. I confess 't is no good indication of our temper, that we need thus to be put in the presse ere we will yield any thing? Yet since we are so disingenuous, 't is a mercy in God to adapt his methods to us; to extort when we will not give, and if he can have no free-will-offerings, yet at least to exact his tribute. Nor does he design the effect of this should cease with the calamity that raised it, but expects our compell'd Adresses should bring us into the way of voluntary ones, and happily ensnare us into piety. And indeed herein are we worse then brutish if it do not. We think it a barbarous rudeness to engage a Man in our Affairs, and as soon as we have served our own turns, never take farther notice of him. Nay, indeed the very Beasts may lecture us

in this piece of Morality, many of them paying a signal gratitude where they have received benefits: and shall we not come up at least to their pitch? Shall not the endearment of our deliverance bring our deliverer into some repute and consideration with us, and make us desire to keep up an acquaintance and entercourse with him? Yet if ingenuity work not with us, let interest at least prevail, and the remembrance how soon we may need him again, admonish us not to make our selves strangers to him. God complains of Israel, *Wherefore say my people we are Lords? we will come no more at thee*, Jer. 2. 31. A very insolent folly to renounce that dependance by which alone they subsisted, and no less will it be in any of us if we stop our recourse to him because we have had advantage by it. We have no assurance that the same occasion shall not recur, but with what face can we then resume that entercourse which in the interval we despised? So that if we have but any ordinary Providence, we shall still so celebrate past Rescues, as to continue in a capacity of begging more, and then we cannot but also confess the benefit of those first Calamities which inspirited our Devotion, and taught us to pray in earnest, and will be ashamed that our thanks should be uttered in a fainter accent then our petitions: or our daily spiritual concerns should be more coldly solli-

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ted then our temporal accidental ones.

12. Nor is it only our devotion that is thus improved by our distresses, but many other Graces; our Faith, our Hope, our Patience, our Christian sufferance and fortitude. It is no triumph of Faith to trust God for those good things which he gives us in hand, this is rather to walk by Sense then Faith, but to rely on him in the greatest destitution, *and against hope to believe in hope*, this is the Faith of a true child of *Abraham*, and will *be imputed* to us (as it was to him) *for righteousness*, Rom. 4. 23. So also our Patience owes all its opportunities of exercise to our afflictions, and consequently owes also a great part of its being to them: for we know desuetude will loose habits. What imaginable use is there of Patience, where there is nothing to suffer? In our prosperous state, we may indeed imploy our temperance, our humility, our caution; but patience seems then a useless vertue: nay, indeed for ought we know may be counterfeit, till adversity bring it to the test. And yet this is the most glorious accomplishment of a Christian, that which most eminently conforms him to the Image of his Savior, whose whole life was a perpetual exercise of this grace; and therefore we love our ease too well, if we are unwilling to buy this Pearl at any price.

13. Lastly, Our thankfulness is (at least

13. Lastly, Our thankfulness is (at least ought to be) increased by our distresses. 'Tis very natural for us to reflect with value and esteem upon those Blessings we have lost, and we too often do it to aggravate our discontent: but sure the more rational use of it is to raise our thankfulness for the time wherein we enjoyed them. Nay, not only our former enjoyments, but even our present deprivations deserves our gratitude, if we consider the happy advantages we may reap from them. If we will perversly cast them away, that unworthy content pays no scores, for we still stand answerable in Gods account for the good he designed, and we might have had by it, and we become lyable to a new charge for our ingratitude, in thus *despising the chastisement of the Lord*, Hebr. 12. 5.

14. And now if all these benefits of afflictions (which are yet but imperfectly recited) may be thought worth considering, it cannot but reconcile us to the sharpest of Gods methods; unless we will own our selves such meer animals, as to have no other apprehensions then what our bodily senses convey to us; for sure he that has reason enough to understand that he has an immortal Soul, cannot but assent that its interests should be served, though with the displacency of his flesh. Yet even in regard of that, our murmurings are oft very unjust; for we do many times igno-

ignorantly prejudge Gods designs towards us even in temporals, who frequently makes a little transient uneasiness the passage to secular Felicities. *Moses*, when he fled out of *Egypt*, probably little thought that he should return thither a *God unto Pharaoh*, Exod. 4. 16. and as little did *Joseph* when he was brought thither a slave, that he was to be a Ruler there: yet as distant as those states were, the Divine Providence had so connected them, that the one depends upon the other. And certainly we may often observe the like overruling Hand in our own distresses, that those events which we have entertained with the greatest regret, have in the consequences been very beneficial to us.

15. To conclude, we have certainly both from speculation and experience, abundant matter to calm all our disquiets, to satisfie our distrusts, and to fix in us an entire resignation to Gods disposals, who has designs which we cannot penetrate, but none which we need fear, unless we our selves pervert them. We have our Saviours word for it, that *he will not give us a stone when we ask bread, nor a scorpion when we ask a fish*, Matth. 7. 9. Nay, his love secures us yet farther from the errors of our own wild choice, and does not give us those stones and scorpions which we importune him for. Let us then leave our concerns to him who best knows them, and make

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it our sole care to entertain his dispensations with as much submission and duty, as he dispenses them with love and wisdom. And if we can but do so, we may dare all the power of Earth and Hell too, to make us miserable: for be our afflictions what they can, we are sure they are but what we in some respect or other need; be they privative or positive, the want of what we wish, or the suffering of what we wish not, they are the disposals of him who cannot err, and we shall finally have cause to say with the Psalmist, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted*, Psalm 119. 71.

SECT. IX.

Of our Misfortunes compared with other Mens.

1. WE come now to impress an equally just and useful Consideration, the comparing our Misfortunes with those of other Mens? and he that does that, will certainly see so little cause to think himself singular, that he will not find himself superlative in calamity; for there is no man living that can with reason affirm himself to be the very unhappiest man, there being innumerable distresses of others which he knows not of and consequently cannot bring them in balance with his own. A multitude of men there are

are whose persons he knows not, and even of those he does, he may be much a stranger to their distresses; many sorrows may lie at the heart of him who carries a smiling face; and many a man has been an object of envy to those who look but on the surface of his state, who yet to those who know his private griefs appears more worthy of compassion. And sure this confused uncertain estimate of other Mens afflictions, may divert us from all loud out-cries of our own. *Solon* seeing a Friend much oppress't with grief, carried him up to a Town that over-looked the City of *Athens*, and shewing him all the Buildings, said to him, consider how many sorrows have, do, and shall in future Ages inhabit under all those roofs, and do not vex thy self with those inconveniencies which are common to mortality, as if they were onely yours. And sure 't was good advice: for suffering is almost as inseparable an adjunct of our nature, as dying is: yet we do not see Men very apt to imbitter their whole lives by the fore-sight that they must die, but seeing it a thing as universal as unevitable, they are more forward to take up the Epicures resolution, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*, 1 Cor. 15. 32. And why should we not look upon Afflictions also as the common lot of humanity, and as we take the advantages, so be content to bear the incumbrances of that state?

2. But

2. But besides that implicite allowance that is thus to be made for the unknown Calamities of others, if we survey but those that lie open and visible to us, the most of us shall find enough to discountenance our complaints. Who is there that when he has most studiously recollected his Miseries, may not find some or other that apparently equals, if not exceeds him? He that stomacks at his own being contemn'd and slighted, may see another persecuted and oppress. He that groans under some sharp pain, may see another afflicted with sharper: and even he that has the most acute torments in his Body, may see another more sadly cruciated by the agonies of his mind. So that if we would but look about us, we should see so many forreign occasions of our pity, that we should be ashamed to confine it wholly to our selves.

3. It will perhaps be said, that this cannot be universally true, for that there must in comparative degrees be some lowest state of misery: I grant it, but still that state consists not in such an indivisible point, that any one person can have the inclosure; or if it do, 't will be so hard for any to discern who that one person is, that I need desire no fairer a composition, then to have every Man suspend his repinings, till he can evince his title. But alace, there are but few that can make any approaches to such a pretence: for though if we

we advert to mens complaints, we should think all degrees of comparison were confounded, and every man were equally the greatest sufferer; yet certainly in the truth of things 't is nothing so: for (not to repete what was before mentioned, that probably no man is miserable in any proportion to the utmost degree of possibility) the remarkably unhappy are very far the less number: and how passionately soever men exaggerate their Calamities, yet perhaps in their sober mood, they will scarce change states with those whom they profess to think more happy then themselves. It was the saying of *Socrates*, that if there were a common bank made of all mens troubles, most men would rather chuse to take those they brought, then to venter upon a new dividend. And indeed he had reason for his supposition; for considering how great a part of many mens Afflictions are of their own making, fictitious and imaginary', they may justly fear least they should exchange. Feathers for Lead, their own empty Shadows for the real and pressing Calamities of others, and cannot but think it best to sit down with their own, which serves their declamations as well, and their ease much better. We oft see men at a little mis-shaping of a garment, a scarce discernible error in their Cook, or their shortest interruption in their Sports, in such transports of trouble, as if they were

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the most unfortunate men in the World; yet for all that, you shall hardly perswade them to change with him whose course clothing superiedes all care of the fashion, whose appetite was never disappointed for want of sawce, and whose perpetual toil makes him insensible what the defeat of sport signifies.

4. Nay, even where the exchange seems more equal, where the Afflictions are on both sides solid and substantial, yet a prudent Man would scarce venture upon the barter. 'Tis no small advantage to know what we have to contest with, to have experimented the worst of its attaques, by which we become better able to Guard our selves: but a new evil comes with the force of a surprise, and finds us open and disarmed. It is indeed almost a miraculous Power that Custom has in reconciling us to things otherwise displeasing; all our Senses are taught to remit of their aversion by familiarity with ungrateful Objects: that ugly form which at first makes us start, by use divests its terrour, and we reconcile our selves to harsh-sounds and ill relishes by long custome. And sure it has the very same effect upon our minds: the most fierce calamities do by acquaintance grow more tractable; so that he that exchanges an old one for a new, does but bring a wild Lion into his house instead of a tame: it may for ought he knows

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mediately tear him in pieces, but at least must cost him a great deal of pains to render it gentle and familiar, and certainly no wise man would wish to make such a bargain.

5. By all this it appears that how extravagantly soever we aggravate our own calamities and extenuate other mens, we dare not upon recollection stand to our own estimate: and what can be said more in prejudice of our discontents? 'T is a granted maxim, that every man must have afflictions. *Man that is born of a woman*, sayes *Job*, *is of few years, and full of trouble*, Job 13. 4. and we must reverence Gods fundamental law, before we can hope for a total exemption. All that any man can aspire to, is to have but an equal share with others, and the generality of men have so, at least none can prove he has not so; and till he can, his murmurs will sure be very unjustifiable, especially when they have this convincing circumstance against them, that he dares not upon sober thoughts change his afflictions with most of his neighbours. He is an ill member of a community, who in publick assessments would shuffle off all payments; and he is no better who in this common tax God has laid upon our nature, is not content to bear his share.

6. And truly would we but consider that in all our sufferings nothing befalls us but what is common

common to our kind, nay vvhich is extreamly exceeded by many within the verge of our own observations, vve must be senselesly partial to be impatient. The Apostle thought it a competent consolation for the first Christians, that *there had no temptation be fallen them but what was common to men*, 1 Cor. 10. 13. and we betray very extravagant opinions of our selves if it be not so to us. Indeed't was scarce possible for us to be so unsatisfied, as the greatest part of us are, did we in the comparing our selves with others, proceed with any tolerable ingenuity.

7. But alace, vve are very fallacious and deceitful in the point, vve do not compare the good of others with our good, nor their evil with our evil; but with an envious curiosity we amass together all the desirable circumstances of our neighbors condition, and with as prying discontent we ransack all our grievances, and confront to them. This is so unsincere a way of proceeding, as the most ordinary understanding can detect. If I should wager that my arm were longer then another mans, and for tryal measure my arm vvith his finger, he must be stupidly silly, that should award for me; and yet this were not a grosser cheat, then that which vve put upon our selves in our comparisons with others. And 't is a little strange to observe unto what various purposes we can apply this one thin piece of

(Sophistry: for when we compare our neighbours and our selves in point of morality, we but reverse the fallacy, and presently make his vices as much exceed ours as our calamities did his in the other instance. They are indeed both great violences to reason and justice, yet the later is sure the pleasanter kind of deceit. A man has some joy in thinking himself less wicked then his neighbour, but what imaginable comfort can he take in thinking himself more miserable? Certainly he that would submit to a cousenage, had much better shift the scene, & think his sufferings less then they are, rather then more; for since opinion is the thing that usually sets an edge upon our calamities, it might be a profitable deceit that could steal that from us.

8. But we need not blindfold our selves if we would but use our eyes aright, & see things in their true shapes; and if we did thus, what a strange turn would there be in the common estimates of the world? How many of the gilded troubles of greatness, which men at a distance look on with so much admiration and desire, would then be as much contemned as now they are courted? A competency would then get the better of abundance, and the now envied pomp of Princes, when balanced with the cares and hazards annext, would be so far from a bait that men like *Saul*, 1 Sam. 10. 22. would *hide themselves* from the preferment;

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and he that understood the weight, would rather chuse to weild a Flaile then a Scepter; yet so childishly are we besotted with the glittering appearance of things, that we conclude felicity must needs dwell where there is a magnificent Portico, and being possest with this fancy we over-look her in our own humbler Cottages, where she would more constantly reside, if she could but find us at home: but we are commonly engaged in a rambling pursuit of her where she is seldomest to be found, and in the interim miss of her at our own doors.

9. Indeed there is scarce a greater folly or unhappiness incident to mans nature, then this fond admiration of other mens enjoyments, and contempt of our own. And whilst we have that humour, it will supplant not onely our present, but all possibilities of our future content. For though we could draw to our selves all those things for which we envy others, we should have no sooner made them our own, then they will grow despicable and nauseous to us. This is a speculation which has bin attested by innumerable experiments, there being nothing more frequent, then to see men with impatient eagerness, nay often with extreme hazards pursue those acquests, which when they have them, they are immediatly sick of. There is scarce any man that may not give himself instances of this in his own

own particular: and yet ſo fatally ſtupid are we, that no defeats will diſcipline us, or take us off from theſe falſe eſtimates of other mens happineſſes. And truly while we ſtate our compariſons ſo unequally, they are as miſchievous as the common proverb ſpeaks them odious: but if we could begin at the right end, and look with as much compaſſion on the adverſities of our brethren, as we do with envy on their proſperities, every man would find cauſe to ſit down contentedly with his own burden, and confeſs that he bears but the proportionable ſhare of his common nature, unleſs perhaps it be where ſome extraordinary demerits of his own have added to the weight; and in that caſe he has more reaſon to admire his afflictions are ſo few, then ſo many. And certainly every man knows ſo many more ills by himſelf, then it is poſſible for him to do by another, that he that really ſees himſelf exceed others in his ſufferings, will find cauſe enough to think he does in ſins alſo.

10. But if we ſtretch the compariſon beyond our contemporaries, and look back to the generations of old, we ſhall have yet farther cauſe to acknowledge Gods great indulgence to us. *Abraham* though the friend of God, was not exempted from ſevere tryals; he was firſt made to wander from his Country, and betake himſelf to a kind of vagrant

life, was a long time ſuſpended from the bleſſing of his deſired off-ſpring: and when at laſt his beloved *Iſaac* was obtained, it cauſed a domeſtick jarre, which he was fain to compoſe by the expulſion of *Ishmael* though his ſon alſo. But what a conteſt may we think there was in his own bowels vvhen that rigorous task was impoſed on him of ſacrificing his *Iſaac*? and though his faith glorioufly triumpht over it, yet ſure there could not be a greater preſſure upon humane nature. *David* the man after Gods own heart, is no leſs ſignal for afflictions then for his piety: he was for a great while an exile from his Country, and (which he moſt bewailed) from the Sanctuary by the preſecutions of *Saul*: and after he was ſetled in that throne to which Gods immediate aſſignation had intitled him, what a ſucceſſion of calamities had he in his own family? the inceſtuous rape of his Daughter, the retaliation of that by the as unnatural murder of *Amnon*, and that ſecunded by another no leſs barbarous conſpiracy of *Abſolom* againſt himſelf, his expulſion from *Jeruſalem*, the baſe revilings of *Shimei*, and finally the loſs of that dearling ſon in the act of his ſin. A cluſter of afflictions, in compariſon whereof the moſt of ours are but like the *gleanings* (as the Prophet ſpeaks) *after the vintage is done*. It were indeed endleſs to inſtance in all the ſeveral Fore-fathers of our Faith before Chriſts incar-

incarnation: the Apostle gives us a brief, but very comprehensive compendium of their sufferings, *They had tryal of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, were sawen asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandred about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute afflicted, tormented: they wandred in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth*, Heb. 11.36,37,38. And if we look on the primitive Christians, we shall see them perfectly the counterpart to them, their privileges consisted not in any immunities from calamities; for their whole lives were scenes of sufferings. St. *Paul* gives us an account of his own *in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft: of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwrack, a night and a day have I been in the deep, in journying often*, &c. 2 Cor. 11.23. and if his single hardships rose thus high, what may we think the whole sum of all his fellow-laborers amounted to together? with that noble Army of martyrs who sealed their faith with their blood; of whose sufferings *Ecclesiastick* history gives us such astonishing relations?

11. And now *being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses*, the Apostles inference is very irrefragable, *let us run with*

patience the race which is set before us, Heb. 12. 1, 2. But yet it is more so, if we proceed on to that consideration he adjoyns. *Looking unto Jesus the Author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the crosse, despising the shame*, verse 3. Indeed, if we contemplate him in the whole course of his life, we shall find him rightly stiled by the Prophet *a man of sorrows*, Isai. 51. And as if he had charged himself with all our griefs as well as our sins, there is scarce any humane calamity which we may not find exemplified in him. Does any complain of the lowness and poverty of his condition? Alace his whole life was a state of indigence: he was forced to be an inmate with the beasts, be laid in a stable at his birth, and after himself professes that he *had not where to lay his head*, Luke 9. 58. Is any oppresst with infamy and reproach? he may see his Saviour accused as *a glutton and wine-bibber*, Luke 7. 34. *a Blasphemer*, Joh. 10. 33. *a sorcerer*, Matth. 12. 24. *a perverter of the nation*, Luke 23. 2. yea to such a sordid lowness had they sunk his repute, that a seditious Thief and Murderer was thought the more eligible person, *not this man but Barabbas*, Joh. 18. 40. And finally all this scene of indignities closed with the sprightful pageantry of *mockery* acted by the soldiers, Matth. 27. 28. and the yet more barbarous insultings of Priests and Scribes, vers. 41. Is any man

despised

deſpiſed or deſerted by his friends? he was contemned by his country-men, thought frantick by his friends, betrayed by one of his diſciples, abandon'd by all, unleſs that one who followed him longeſt, to renounce him the moſt shamefully by a three-fold abjuration. Nay, what is infinitely more then this, he ſeem'd deſerted by God alſo, as is witneſſed by that doleful exclamation, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* Matth. 27. 64. Is any diſſatisfied with the hardships or laboriouſneſs of this life? let him remember his Saviours was not a life of delicacy or eaſe: he was never enter'd in thoſe Academies of luxury, where men are *gorgeouſly apparel'd and liv'd delicately*, Luke 7. 25. but he was brought under the mean roof of a Carpenter, and conſequently ſubjected to all the lowneſs of ſuch an education. His initiation to his Prophetick office was with the miraculous ſeverity of a 40. dayes faſt, and in his diſcharge of it, we find him in perpetual labors, *going about doing good*, Acts 10. 38. and that not in triumph, like a Prince beſtowing his largeſſes, but in weary peregrinations never riding but once, and that onely upon a borrow'd beaſt, and *to fulfil a prophecy*, Matth. 24. Does any man groan under sharp and acute pains? let him conſider what his redeemer endur'd, how in his infancy at his circumciſion he offer'd the firſt fruits, as an earneſt of that bloody vintage when *he*

trod the wine-preſs alone, Iſai. 63. 3. Let him attend him through all the ſtage of his direful paſſion, and behold his arms pinion'd with rough cords, his head ſmote with a reed, and torn with his crown of thorns, his back ploughed with thoſe *long furrows* (Pſ. 120. 3.) the ſcourges had made; his macerated feeble body oppreſt with the weight of his croſſe, and at laſt rackt and extended on it; his hands and feet, thoſe nervous and conſequently moſt ſenſible parts tranfixt with nails, his whole body faſtned to that accurſed tree, and expoſed naked to the air in a cold ſeaſon; his throat parched with thirſt, and yet more afflicted with vinegar and gall vvherewith they pretended to relieve him: and finally his life expiring amidſt the full ſenſe of theſe accurate torments. Laſtly, does any man labor under the bittereſt of all ſorrows: importunate temptations to, or a wounded ſpirit for ſin? even here alſo he may find that he has an *high Prieſt who hath been touched with the ſenſe of his infirmities*, Hebr. 4. 15. He vvas violently aſſaulted vvith a ſucceſſion of temptations, Matth. 4. and vve cannot doubt but Satan vvould on him employ the utmoſt of his skill. Nor vvas he leſſe oppreſt vvith the burden of ſin, (ours I mean though not his own.) What may vve think vvere his apprehenſions in the Garden, vvhen he ſo earneſtly deprecated that vvhich vvas his vvhole errand

errand into the World? What a dreadful preſſure was that which wrung from him that bloody ſweat, and caſt him into that inexplicable agony, the horror whereof was beyond the comprehenſions of any but his who felt it? And finally how amazing was the ſenſe of divine wrath, which extorted that ſtupendus complaint, that *ſtrong cry* on the croſs, Hebr. 5.7. the ſharp accent whereof, if it do aright ſound in our hearts, muſt certainly quite overwhelm our loudeſt groans? And now certainly I may ſay with *Pilate*, *Ecce homo*, behold the man, or rather with a more divine Author, Behold, *if ever there were ſorrows like unto his ſorrows*, Lam. 1. 12.

12. And ſure it were but a reaſonable inference, that which we find made by Chriſt himſelf, *if theſe things be done in a green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?* Luke 23. 31. If an imputative guilt could nurish ſo ſcorching a flame, pull down ſo ſevere a wrath, what can we expect who are meerly made up of combuſtible matter, whoſe proper perſonal ſins cry for vengeance? Sure were we to judge by humane meaſures, we ſhould reckon to have more then a double portion of our Saviors ſufferings entail'd upon us: yet ſuch is the efficacy of his, that they have commuted for ours, and have left us only ſuch a ſhare, as may evidence our relation to our crucified Lord: ſuch as may ſerve only for badges

and cognizances to whom we retain. For alace, let the moſt afflicted of us weigh our ſorrows with his, how abſurdly unequal will the compariſon appear? And therefore as the beſt expedient to baffle our mutinies, to ſhame us out of our repinings, let us often draw this uneven parellel, confront our petty uneaſineſſes with his unſpeakable torments; and ſure 'tis impoſſible but our admiration and gratitude muſt ſupplant our impatiencies.

13. This is indeed the method to which the Apoſtle directs us, *Conſider him that endured ſuch contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf, leſt ye be weary and faint in your minds: ye have not yet reſiſted unto blood*, Hebr. 12. 34. Was he contradicted, and ſhall we expect to be humor'd and compli'd with? Did he reſiſt to blood; and ſhall we think thoſe preſſures intolerable, which force only a few tears from us? This is ſuch an unmanly niceneſs, as utterly makes us unfit to follow the Captain of our ſalvation. What a ſoldier is he like to make, that will take no ſhare of the hazards and hardſhips of His General? Honeſt *Uriah* would not take the lawful ſolaces of his own houſe, upon the conſideration that his *Lord Joab* (though but his fellow ſubject) *lay incamped in the open fields*, 2 Sam. 11. 11. yea, though he was ſent by him from the Camp. And ſhall we baſely forſake ours in purſuit of our eaſe? He is of a dangerous ſpirit, whom the

the example of his ſuperior will not animate. *Plutarch* tells us, that *Cato* marching through the deſarts, was ſo diſtreſt for water, that a ſmall quantity was brought to him in a helmet as a great prize, which he refuſing becauſe he could not help his ſoldiers to the like, they were ſo tranſported with that generoſity, that it extinguisht the ſenſe of their thirſt, and they were aſhamed to complain of what their Leader voluntarily endured for their ſakes. And ſurely we extreamly diſcredit our inſtitution, if we cannot equal their ingenuity, and follow ours with as great alacrity through all the difficulties he has traced before us, and for us.

14. Nor let us think to excuſe our ſelves upon the impotency of our flesh, which wants the aſſiſtance which his divinity gave him: for that plea is ſuperſeded by the fore-mentioned exemples of the Saints, men of like paſſions with us, who not only patiently, but joyfully endured all tribulations; by which it appears it is not impoſſible to our nature, with thoſe aids of grace which are common to us with them: for certainly the difference between them and us, is not ſo much in the degrees of the aids, as in the diligence of employing them. Let us therefore, as the Apoſtle adviſes, *lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees*, Hebr. 12. 12. and with a noble emulation follow thoſe heroick patterns

they have set us. And since we see that even those Favorites of heaven, have smarted so severely, let us never dream of an immunity; but when ever we find our selves inclining to any such flattering hope, let every one of us upbraid our selves in those terms the *Iews* did our Saviour, *Art thou greater then Abraham, and the Prophets, whom makest thou thy self?* John 8.52. Nay, we may descend lower and take in not only the inferior Saints of former times, but all those our contempotaries in sufferings, which are most within our view, and may ask the Apostles question, *what then? are we better then they?* Rom. 3.9. If we think we are, 't is certain we are so much worse by that insolence; and if we confess we are not, upon what score can we pretend to be better treated? To conclude, let us not pore onely upon our peculiar evils, but attentively look about us, and consider what others endure: and since in frolicks we can sport our selves with many uneasinesses for company sake, let us not be more pusillanimous in our soberer moods, but every man cheerfully take his turn in bearing the common burden of mortality, till we put off both it and its appendages together, when this mortal shall put on immortality, 1 Cor. 15. 54.

SECT.

SECT. X.

Of particular Aids for gaining of Contentment.

1. WE have now past through all those considerations we at first proposed, and may trust the considering Reader to make his own collections: yet because impatience is the vice that has been all this while arraigned, I am to fore-see it possible, that those who have the greatest degree of that, may be the least willing to attend the whole process and therefore I think it may not be amisse for their ease to suit and reduce all into some short directions and rules for the acquiring contentment.

2. The first and most fundamental is, the mortifying our pride, which as it is the seminary of most sins, so especially this of repining. Men that are highly opinioned of themselves are commonly unsatisfiable: for how well soever they are treated, they still think it short of their merits. Princes have often experimented this in those who have done them signal services; but God finds it in those who have done him none, and we expect he shall dispense to us according to those false estimates we put upon our selves. Therefore he that aspires to Content, must

firſt take truer meaſures of himſelf, and conſider that as he was nothing till God gave him a being, ſo all that he can produce from that being, is Gods by original right, and therefore can pretend to nothing of reward; ſo that whatever he receives, is ſtill upon the account of new bounty; and to complain that he has no more, is like the murmurs of an unthankful debtor, who would ſtill increaſe thoſe ſcores which he knows he can never pay.

3. In the ſecond place, let every man conſider how many bleſſings (notwithſtanding his no claime to any) he daily enjoyes: and whether thoſe he ſo impatiently raves after be not much inferior to them. Nay let him ask his own heart, whether he would quit all thoſe he has, for them he wants, and if he would not (as I ſuppoſe no man in his wits would, thoſe wits being part of the barter) let him then judge how unreaſonable his repinings are, when himſelf confeſſes he has the better part of worldly happineſs, and never any man living had all.

4. In the third place therefore let him ſecure his duty of thankfulneſs for thoſe good things he hath, and that will inſenſibly undermine his impatiencies for the reſt, it being impoſſible to be at once thankful and murmuring. To this purpoſe it were very well,

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if he would keep a solemn catalogue of all the bounties, protections, and deliverances he has received from Gods hand, and every night examine what accessions that day has brought to the sum: and he that did this, would undoubtedly find so many incitations to gratitude, that all those to discontent would be stifled in the croud. And since acknowledgement of Gods mercies is all the tribute he exacts for them, we must certainly look on that as an indispensable duty: & therefore he that finds that God shortens his hand, stops the efflux of his bounty towards him, should reflect on himself, whether he be not behind in that homage by which he holds, and have not by his unthankfulness *turned away good things from him*, Esai. 59. 8. And if he find it so (as who alace is there that may not?) he cannot sure for shame complain, but must in prudence reinforce his gratitude for what is left, as the best means to recover what he has lost.

5. But his murmurs will yet be more amazingly silenc'd, if in the fourth place he compares the good things he enjoyes with the ill he has done. Certainly, this is a most infallible cure for our impatiencies, the holiest man living being able to accuse himself of such sins, as would according to all humane measures of equity forfeit all blessings, and

pull down a greater weight of judgement then the moſt miſerable groan under. Therefore as before I adviſed to keep a catalogue of benefits received, ſo here it vvould be of uſe to draw up one of ſins committed. And doubtleſs he that confronts the one vvith the other cannot but be aſtonished to find them both ſo numerous, equally vvondring at Gods mercy in continuing his bleſſings, in deſpight of all his provocations, and at his own baſeneſs in continuing his provocations, in deſpight of all thoſe bleſſings. Indeed 'tis nothing but our affected ignorance of our own demerits, that makes it poſſible for us to repine under the ſevereſt of Gods diſpenſations. Would vve but ranſack our hearts, and ſee all the abominations that lie there, nay would the moſt of us but recollect thoſe barefaced crimes, which even the World can witneſs againſt us, we should find more then enough to ballance the heavieſt of our preſſures. When therefore by our impatient ſtruglings vve fret and gall our ſelves under our burdens, let us interrogate our ſouls in the words of the Prophet, *Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his ſin?* Let us not ſpend our breath in murmurs and out-cryes, which only ſerve to provoke more ſtripes: but *let us ſearch and try our wayes, and turn again to the Lord*, Lam. 3. 39. diligently ſeek out *that accurſed thing* which has cauſed

cauſed our diſcomfeiture, Josh. 6. 18. and by the removal of that, prepare the way for the acceſs of mercy. But alace, how prepoſterous a method do we take in our afflictions? We accuſe every thing but what we ought, furiouſly fly at all the ſecond cauſes of our calamity, nay too often at the firſt by impious diſputes of providence, and in the mean time, as *Job* ſpeaks, *the root of the matter is found in us*, Job 19. 28. We ſhelter and protect in our boſoms the real Author of our miſeries. The true way then to allay the ſenſe of our ſufferings, is to ſharpen that of our ſins. The prodigal thought the meaneſt condition in his fathers family a preferment, *Make me one of thy hired ſervants*, Luke 15. 19. And if we have his penitence, we ſhall have his ſubmiſſion alſo, and calmly attend Gods diſpoſals of us.

6. As every man in his affliction is to look inward on his own heart, ſo alſo upward, and conſider by whoſe providence all events are order'd. *Is there any evil* (i. e. of punishment) *in the city, and the Lord hath not done it*? Amos 3. 6. and what are we worms that we ſhould diſpute with him? Shall a man contend with his Maker? Let the *potsherd ſtrive with the potsherds of the earth*, Iſai. 45. 9. And as his power is not to be controul'd, ſo neither is his juſtice to be impeach'd. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right*?

Gen.

Genes. 18. 25. And where we can neither resist nor appeal, what have we to do but humbly to submit? Nor are we only compelled to it by necessity, but induced and invited by interest, since his dispensations are directed not barely to assert his dominion, but to evidence his paternal care over us. He discerns our needs, and accordingly applies to us. The benignity of his nature permits him not to take delight in our distresses, *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*, Lam. 3. 33. and therefore when ever he administers to us a bitter cup, we may be sure the ingredients are medicinal, and such as our infirmities require. He dares not trust our intemperate appetites with unmixt prosperities, the lushiousness whereof, though it may please our palats, yet like Saint *Johns* book, Revel. 10. 9. *That bony in the mou b may prove gall in the bowels*, ingender the most fatal diseases. Let us therefore in our calamities *not consult with flesh and blood*, Galat. 1. 16. (which the more it is bemoan'd, the more it complains) but look to the hand that strikes; and assure our selves, that the stripes are not more severe, then he sees necessary in order to our good: and since they are so, they ought in reason to be our choices as well as his; and not only religion, but self-love will prompt us to say, with old *Ely*, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*, 1 Sam. 3. 11.

But

But alace, we do not understand what is our interest; because we do not rightly understand what we are our selves. We consider our selves meerly in our animal being, our bodies and those sensitive faculties vested in them, and when we are invaded there, we think we are undone, though that breach be made onely, to relieve that diviner part within us, besieged and oppresst with the flesh about it (for so God knows it too often is;) or if we do not consider it in that notion of an enemy, yet at the utmost estimate, the body is to the soul but as the garment to the body, a decent case or cover: now what man (not stark frantick) would not rather have his clothes cut then his flesh? and then by the rate of proportion, we may well question our own sobriety, when we repine that our souls are secured at the cost of our bodies, and that is certainly the worst, the unkindest design, that God has upon us; and our impatient resistances serve only to frustrate the kind, the medicinal part of afflictions, but will not at all rescue us from the severe. Our murmurings may ruine our souls, but will never avert any of our outward calamities.

7. A seventh help to contentment is to have a right estimate of the World, and the common state of humanity: to consider the World but as a stage, and our selves but as actors, and to resolve that it is very little material what

what part we play, so we do it well. A Comedian may get as much applause by acting the slave as the conqueror; and he that acts the one to day, may to morrow reverse the part, and personate the other. So great are the vicissitudes of the World, that there is no building any firm hopes upon it. All the certainty we have of it, is, that in every condition it has its uneasinesses: so that when we court a change, we rather seek to vary then end our miseries. And certainly he that has well impresst upon his mind the vanity and vexation of the World, cannot be much surprised at any thing that befalls him in it. We expect no more of any thing but to do its kind, and we may as well be angry that we cannot bring the lions to our cribs, or fix the wind to a certain point, as that we cannot secure our selves from dangers and disappointments in this rough and mutable World. We are therefore to lay it as an infallible maxime, that in this vale of tears every man must meet with sorrows and disasters: and then sure we may take our peculiar with evenness of temper, as being but the natural consequent of our being men. And though possibly we may every one think himself to have a double portion, yet that is usually from the deceitful comparisons we make of our selves with others. We take the magnifying glasses of discontent and envy when we view our own miseries and others

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felicities, but look on our enjoyments & their sufferings through the contracting optics of ingratitude and incompassions: and whilst we do thus, 't is impossible but we must foment our own dissatisfactions. He that will compare to good purpose must do it honestly and sincerely, and view his neighbours calamities with the same attention he does his own, and his own comforts with the same he does his neighbours: and then many of the great seeming inequalities would come pretty near a level.

8. But even where they do not, it in the eighth place deserves however to be consider'd how ill natur'd a thing it is, for any man to think himself more miserable because another is happy: and yet this is the very thing, by which alone many men have made themselves wretched: for many have created wants, meerly from the envious contemplation of other mens abundance. And indeed there is nothing more disingenuous, or (to go higher) more Diabolical. *Lucifer* was happy enough in his original state, yet could not think himself so because he was *not like the most high*, Isai. 14. 14. And when by that insolent ambition he had forfeited bliss, it has ever since been an aggravation of his torment, that mankind is assumed to a capacity of it; and accordingly he makes it the design of his envious industry to defeat him.

Now

Now how perfectly are the two first parts of this copy transcribed, by those who first cannot be satisfied with any inferior degree of prosperity, and then whet their impatiencies with other mens enjoyments of what they cannot attain? And 'tis much to be doubted, that they who go thus far may compleat the parallel, and endeavour when they have opportunity to undermine that happiness they envy. Therefore since Satan is so apt to impress his whole image, where he has drawn any of his lineaments, it concerns us warily to guard our selves, and by a Christian Sympathy with our brethren, *Rejoyce with them that do rejoyce*, Rom. 12. 15. make the comforts of others, an allay not an improvement of our own miseries. Charity has a strange magnetick power, and attracts the concerns of our brethren to us, and he that has that in his breast can never want refreshment, whilst any about him are happy, for by adopting their interest, he shares in their joyes. *Jethro* though an alien, *rejoyced for all the good God had done to Israel*, Exod. 18. 9. and why should not we have as sensible a concurrence with our fellow Christians? And he that has so, will still find something to balance his own sufferings.

9. Let him that aspires to contentment set bounds to his desire. 'T is our common fault in this affair, we usually begin at the wrong end,

nd, we *enlarge our desires as hell, and cannot be satisfied*, Hab. 2. 5. and then think God ules us ill, if he do not fill our insatiable appetites; whereas if we would confine our expectations to those things which we need, or he has promised, there are few of us who would not find them abundantly answered. Alace, how few things are there which our nature (if not stimulated by fancy and luxury) requires? And how rare is it to find them who want those? Nay, who have not many additionals for delight and pleasure? And yet Gods promise under the Go pel extends only to tho e necessaries, for where Christ assures his disciples that *these things shall be added unto them*, Matth. 6. 33. the context apparently restrains *these things* to meat and drink, and cloathing. Therefore take *no thought for the life what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, nor yet for the body what you shall put on*, verse 25. now what pretence have we to claime more then our Charter gives us? God never articled with the ambitious to give him honours, with the covetous to fill his bags, or with the voluptuous to feed his luxuries. Let us therefore, if we expect to be satisfied, modestly confine our desires within the limits he has set us: and then every accession which he superads will appear (what it is) a largess and bounty. But whilst our appetites are boundless, and rather stretcht then filled with our acquests,

acquests, what possibility is there of their satisfaction? And when we importune God for it, we do but assign him such a task the Poets made a representation of their Hell, the filling a sieve with water, or the rolling a stone up a precipice.

10. A great expedient for contentment, is to confine our thoughts to the present, and not to let them loose to future events. Would we but do this, we might shake off a great part of our burden: for we often heap fantastick loads upon our selves by anxious presages of things which perhaps will never happen, and yet sink more under them, then under the real weight that is actually upon us. And this is certainly one of the greatest follies imaginable: for either the evil will come or it will not, if it will, 't is sure no such desirable guest that we should go out to meet it, we shall feel it time enough when it falls on us; we need not project to anticipate our sense of it: but if it will not, what extreme madness is it for a man to torment himself with that which will never be, to create engines of tortures, and by such aerial afflictions, make himself as miserable as the most real ones could do? And truely this is all that we usually get by our fore-sights. Prevision is one of Gods attributes, & he mocks at all our pretences to to it, by a frequent defeating of all our fore-casts. He do's it often in our hopes: some little cross cir-

rcumſtance many times demolishes thoſe odly machins we raiſe to our ſelves: and e does it no leſs in our fears, thoſe ills we ſo mnly expected often baulk us, and others om an unexpected coaſt ſuddenly invade us. nd ſince we are ſo blind, ſo short-ſighted, let s never take upon us to be ſcouts, to diſcover anger at a diſtance (for 'tis manifold odds we hall only bring home falſe alarms) but let us ſt our ſelves upon that moſt admirable Aoriſm of our bleſſed Lord, *Sufficient unto e day is the evil thereof*, Matth. 6. 34. apply ur ſelves with Chriſtian courage to bear the reſent, and leave God either to augment or iminish, as he ſees fit for the future. Or if ve will needs be looking forward, let it be in bedience not contradiction to our duty: let is entertain our ſelves with thoſe futurities vhich vve are ſure are not Chimera's, death nd judgement, heaven and hell. The nearer ve draw theſe things to our view, the more nſenſible will all intermedial objects be; they will deceive our ſenſe of preſent, and much more foreſtal the apprehenſion of future evils: for 'tis our neglect of things eternal, that eaves us thus at leiſure for the tranſitory.

11. In the laſt place, let us in all our diſtreſſes ſuperſede our anxieties and ſolliciudes by that moſt effectual remedy the Apoſtle preſcribes, *Is any man afflicted let him ray*, Jam. 5. 14. And this ſure is a moſt ra-

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tional prescription: for alace, what can we do towards the redress of our griefs. We who are so impotent, that we have not powe over the most despicable excrescence of ou own body, cannot make *on hair white or black* Matth. 5. 39. what can we do towards th new moulding our condition, or modellin things without us? Our sollicitudes serv only to bind our burdens faster upon us, bu this expedient of Prayer will certainly reliev us, *Call upon me*, says God, *in the time of trou ble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt prais me*, Psalm 50. 15. When ever therefore we are sinking in the floods of affliction, let us thus support our selves by representing our wants unto our gracious Lord, cry unto him as Saint *Peter* did, Matth. 14. 30. and he will *take us by the hand, and be the winds*, never so *boisterous or contrary*, preserve us from sinking the waves or billows of this troublesome World, will serve but to toss us closer into his arms, who can with a word appease the roughest tempest, or rescue from it. O let us not then be so unkind to our selves, as to neglect this infallible means of our deliverance but with the Psalmist take our refuge under the *shadow of the divine wings till th' calamity be over-past*. Psalm 57. 1. And as this is a sure expedient in all our real important afflictions, so it is a good test by which to try what are so. We are often peevish and disquieted at

trifles,

ffles, nay we take up the quarrels of our lusts
d vices, and are discontented when they
nt their wisht supplies. Now in either of
ese cases, no man that at all considers who
prays to, will dare to insert these in his
yers, it being a contempt of God to invoke
m in things so slight as the one, or impious
the other. It will therefore be good for
ry man when he goes to address for relief,
consider which of his pressures they are,
at are worthy of that solemn deprecation:
d when he has singled those out, let him re-
ct, and he will find he has in that prejudg'd
his other discontents as frivolous or wicked.
d then sure he cannot think fit to harbour
em, but must for shame dismiss them, since
ey are such, as he dars not avow to him,
om whom alone he can expect relief. God
wayes pities our real miseries, but our ima-
nary ones dare not demand it. Let us not
en create such diseases to our selves, as we
not declare to our Physitian: and when
e are precluded, for all the rest St. *Pauls*
ipe is a Catholicon, *Be careful for nothing,*
in every thing by prayers and supplications,
th thanksgiving, let your requests be made
own to God. Phil. 4. 6.

SECT. XI.

Of Resignation.

1. AND now amidst such variety of receits, 't will be hard to instance any one sort of calamity which can escape their efficacy, if they be but duly applied. But indeed we have generally a compendious way of frustrating all remedies by never making use of them: like fantastick patients we are well enough content to have our disease discourst, and medicines prescrib'd, but when the Physick comes, have still some pretence or other to protract the taking it. But I shall beseech the Reader to consider, that counsels are not charms, to work without any cooperation of the concern'd person: they must be adverted to, they must be ponder'd and consider'd, and finally they must be practic'd, or else the utmost good they can do us, is to give us a few hours divertisement in the reading: but they do us a mischief that infinitly out-weighs it, for they improve our guilts by the ineffective tender they make of rescuing us from them, and leave us accountable not onely for the original crimes, but our obstinate adhesion to them in spight of admonition.

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2. I say this because it is a little too notorious, that many take up books only as they do cards or dice, as an instrument of diversion. 'Tis a good entertainment of their curiosity to see what can be said upon any subject, and be it well or ill handled, they can please themselves equally with the ingenuity or ridiculousness of the composure, and when they have done this, they have done all they design'd. This indeed may be tolerable in Romances and Play-books, but sure it ill befits Divinity. And yet I fear it oftenest happens there: for in the former some do project some trivial improvements, as the embellishing of their stile, the inspiriting of their fancies; and some men would scarce be able to drive their pedling trade of wit, did they not thus sweep the stage: but alace, how many books of piety are read, of which one cannot discern the least tincture in mens conversations, which sure does in a great measure proceed from the want of a determinate design in their reading, mens practice being not apt to be less rovers then their speculation. He that takes a practical subject in hand, must do it with a design to conform his practise to what he shall there be convinc'd to be his duty, and he that comes not with this probity of mind, is not like to be much benefited by his reading.

3. But one would think this should be an unnecessary caution at this time, for since the intent of this tract, is only to shew men the way to contentment, 't is to be supposed the Readers will be as much in earnest, as the Writer can be, it being every mans proper and most important interest, the instating him in the highest and most supreme felicity that this World can admit: yet for all this fair probability, I doubt many will in this instance have the same indifference they have in their other spiritual concerns.

4. 'T is true indeed that a querulous repining humour, is one of the most pernicious, the most ugly habits incident to mankind, but yet as deformed people are oft the most in love with themselves, so this crooked piece of our temper, is of all others the most indulgent to it self. Melancholly is the most stub-born and untractable of all humours; and discontent being the off-spring of that, partakes of that inflexibility: and accordingly we see how impregnable it often is, against all assaults of reason and Religion too. *Jonah* in a sullen mood would justifie his discontent even to God himself, and in spight of that calm reproof, *doest thou well to be angry?* Jon. 4. 9. aver *he did well to be angry even to the death.*

And

And do we not frequently see men upon an impatience of some disappointment, grow angry even at their comforts? Their friends, their children, their meat, their drink, every thing grows nauseous to them, and in a frantick discontent, they often fling away those things which they most value. Besides this peevish impatience is of so aerial a diet, that 't is scarce possible to starve it: It will nurish it self with Phantasms and Chimeras, suborn a thousand surmises and imaginary distresses to abet its pretences: And though every one of us can remonstrate to one another, the unreasonableness of this discontent; yet scarce any of us will draw the argument home, or suffer our selves to be convinc'd by what we urge as irrefragable to others. Nay, farther this humour is impatient of any diversion, loves to converse only with it self. In bodily pains, men that despair of cure are yet glad of allayes and mitigations, and strive by all arts, to divert and deceive the sense of their anguish: but in this disease of the mind, men cherish and improve their torment, roll and chew the bitter pill in their mouths, that they may be sure to have its utmost flavour; and by devoting all their thoughts to the subject of their grief, keep up an uninterrupted sense of it: as if they had the same Tyranny for

themselves which *Caligula* had for others, and loved to feel themselves die. Indeed there is not a more absurd contradiction in the World, then to hear men cry out of the weight, the intolerableneſſe of their burden, and yet graſp it as faſt as if their life were bound up in it; will not depoſite it, no not for the ſmalleſt breathing time. A ſtrange faſcination ſure, and yet ſo frequent, that it ought to be the fundamental care of him that would cure men of their diſcontents, to bring them to a hearty willingneſſe of being cured.

5. It may be this will look like paradox, and every man will be apt to ſay he wiſhes nothing more in earneſt, then to be cured of his preſent diſcontent. He that is poor would be cured by wealth, he that is low and obſcure by honour and greatneſſe: but ſo an Hydropick perſon may ſay he deſires to have his thirſt cured by a perpetual ſupply of drink, yet all ſober people know, that that is the onely way to increaſe it; but let the whole habit of the body be rectified, and then the thirſt will ceaſe of it ſelf. And certainly 't is the very ſame in the preſent caſe, no outward acceſſions will ever ſatisfie our cravings, our appetites muſt be tamed and reduced, and they will never be able to raiſe tumults; or put us into munity and diſcontent:

and

and he (and none but he) that submits to this method, can truely be said to desire a cure.

6. But he that thus attests the reality of his desires, and seeks contentment in its proper sphere, may surely arrive to some considerable degrees of it. We find in all ages men, that onely by the direction of natural light have calmed their disquiets, and reasoned themselves into contentment even under great and sensible pressures; men who amidst the acutest torments, have still preserved a serenity of mind, and have frustrated contempts and reproaches by disregarding them: and sure we give a very ill account of our Christianity; if we cannot do as much with it as they did without it.

7. I do not here propose such a Stoical insensibility as makes no distinction of events, which though it has been vainly pretended to by many, yet sure was never attained by any, upon the strength of discourse. Some natural dulnesse or casual stupefaction must concur to that, and perhaps by doing so, has had the luck to be canoniz'd for vertue. I mean only such a superiority of mind as raises us above our sufferings, though it exempt us not from the sense of them. We cannot propose to our selves a higher patern in any vertue then our blessed Lord: yet we see he

not onely felt that load under which he lay, but had the moſt pungent and quick ſenſe of it, ſuch as prompted thoſe earneſt deprecations, *Father if it be poſſible let this Cup paſſe*: yet all thoſe diſplacencies of his flesh were ſurmounted by the reſignation of his Spirit, *nevertheleſſe not what I will, but what thou wilt*, Luke 22. And certainly he that in imitation of this patern, does in ſpight of all the reluctancies of his ſence, thus entirely ſubmit his will, however he may be ſad, yet he is not impatient; nor is he like to be ſad long, for to him that is thus reſign'd, *Light will ſpring up*, Pſalm 97. 11. ſome good Angel will be ſent like that to our Saviour to relieve his diſconſolation, God will ſend either ſome outward allayes, or give ſuch interior comforts and ſupports, as ſhall counterpoiſe thoſe afflictions he takes not off.

8. Indeed the grand deſign of God in correcting us is (the ſame with that of a prudent Parents towards his Child) to break our wills. That ſtub-born faculty will ſcarce bend with eaſy touches, and therefore does require ſome force: and when by that rougher handling, he has brought it to a pliantneſſe, the work is done. 'T is therefore our intereſt to cooperate with this deſign, to aſſiſt as much as we are able towards

wards the subjugating this unruly part of our selves, This is that *Sheba*, 2 Sam. 20. the surrendring of whom is Gods expectation in all the close sieges he layes to us. Let us then be so wise, as by an early resigning it to divert his farther hostilities, and buy our peace with him.

9. And truely this is the way not onely to gain peace with him, but our selves too: 'tis the usurpation of our will over our reason which breeds all the confusion and tumults within our own breasts, and there is no possibility of curbing its insolence, but by putting it into safe custody, committing it to him who (as our Church teaches us) alone can order the unruly wills of sinfull men. Indeed nothing but experience can fully inform us of the serenity, and calm of that soul, who has resigned his will to God. All care of chusing for himself is happily superseded, he is tempted to no anxious fore-casts for future events, for he knows nothing can happen in contradiction of that supreme will, in which he hath sanctuary: which will certainly chuse for him with that tenderness and regard, that a faithful Guardian would for pupil, an indulgent father for his child that casts its self into his arms. Certainly, there is not in the World such a holy sort of artifice, so Divine a charm to tye our God to us, as this of

resigning our selves to him. We find the Gibeonites by yielding themselves vassals to the Israelites, had their whole army at their back to rescue them in their danger, Jos. 10.6. and can we think God is less considerate of his homagers and dependents? No certainly, his honour as well as his compassion is concern'd in the relief of those who have surrendred themselves to him.

10. Farther yet, when by resignation we have united our wills to God, we have quite changed the scene, and we who when our wills stood single were lyable to perpetual defeats, in this blessed combination can never be croſt. When our will is twisted and involved with Gods, the same omnipotence which backs his will, does also attend ours. Gods will, we are sure admits of no controle, can never be resisted, and we have the same security for ours, so long as it concurs with it. By this means all calamities are unsting'd, and even those things which are most repugnant to our sensitive natures, are yet very agreeable to our spirits, when we consider they are implicitly our own choice, since they are certainly his, whom he have deputed to elect for us. Indeed there can be no face of adversity so averting and formidable, which set in this light will not look amiable. We see daily how many uneasinesses

and

and prejudices men will contentedly suffer in pursuit of their wills: and if we have really espoused Gods, made his will ours, we shall with as great (nay far greater) alacrity embrace its distributions, how uneasie soever to our sense; our souls will more acquiesce in the accomplishment of the Divine will, then our flesh can reluct to any severe effects of it.

11. Here then is that footing of firm ground, on which whosoever can stand, may indeed do that which *Archimides* boasted, move the whole World. He may as to himself subvert the whole course of sublunary things, unvenem all those calamities which are to others the gall of Asps; and in a farther sense verifie that Evangelical prophecy, of *beating swords into plough-shares, and spears into pruning hooks*, Esai. 2. 4. the most hostile weapons, the most adverse events, shall be by him converted into instruments of fertility, shall only advance his spiritual growth.

12. And now who can chuse but confesse this a much more eligible state, then to be alwayes haraſled with solicitudes and cares, perpetually either fearing future defeats, or bewailing the past. And then what can we call it less then madnesse or enchantment, for men to act so contrary to

their own dictates; yea, to their very ſenſe and experience, too ſee and acknowledge the inexplicable felicity of a reſigned will, and yet perverſely to hold out theirs, though they can get nothing by it, but the ſullen pleaſure of oppoſing God, and tormenting themſelves? Let us therefore if not for our duty or eaſe, yet at leaſt for our reputation, the aſſerting our ſelves men of ſobriety and common ſenſe, do that which upon all theſe intereſts we are obliged; let us but give up our wills, and with them we ſhall certainly diveſt our ſelves of all our fruitleſs anxieties, and caſt our burdens upon him who invites us to do ſo. He who bears all our ſins, will bear all our ſorrows, our griefs too: if we will but be content to depoſite them, he will relieve us from all thoſe oppreſſing weights, which make *our ſouls cleave to the duſt*, Pſalm 119. 25. and will in exchange give us onely his *light*, *his pleaſant burden*, Matth. 11. 33. In a word, there will be no care left for us, but that of keeping our ſelves in a capacity of his: let us but ſecure our love to him, and we are aſcertain'd that *all things ſhall work together for our good*, Rom. 8. 28.

To conclude, Reſignation and Contentment are vertues, not only of a near cognation and reſemblance, but they are linked as the Cauſe

Cause and the Effect. Let us but make sure of Resignation, and Content will flow into us without our farther industry: as on the contrary whilst our wills are at defiance with Gods, we shall alwayes find things at as great defiance with ours. All our subtiletes or industries will never mould them to our satisfactions, till we have moulded our selves into that pliant temper that we can cordially say, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good,* 1 Sam. 3. 18.

The Close.

1. THis short institution of the *Art of Contentment*, cannot more naturally, or more desirably draw to a conclusion, then in the resort we have given it, in the bosome of divine *Providence*. The Roman conquerours as the last pitch of all their triumphs, went to the Capitol, and laid their Garlands in the lap of *Jupiter*: but the Christian has an easier way to Triumph, to put his crown of thorns (for that is the trophy of his victories) within the arms of his gracious God; there lodge his fears, his wants, his sorrows, and himself too, as in the best repository.

2. The Gospel command of *not caring for the morrow*, Matth. 6. 34. and being *carefull for nothing*, Phil. 4. 6. nakedly proposed, might seem the abandoning of us to all the calamities of life: but when we are directed to *cast all our care* upon a gracious and all powerful Parent, and are assured that *he cares for us*, 1 Petr. 5. 7. that *though a woman may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion of the son of her womb, yet will he not forget* his children, Isai. 49. 15. this will abundantly supersede all cavil and objection. Whilst worldly men trust in an arm

arm of flesh, lay up *treasure on earth*, a prey for *rust and moth*, Matth. 6. 19. and *a torment* to themselves, James 5. 3. the Christian has Omnipotence for his support, and a *treasure in Heaven, where no thief approaches, nor moth corrupts*, Matth. 6. 20. Whil'st bold inquirers call in question Gods secret will, oblige him to their sub or supra lapsarian schemes, their absolute or conditional decrees, their grace foreseen or predetermined; the pious man with aweful acquiescence submits to that which is revealed: resolves for ever to obey, but never to dispute; as knowing that the beloved Disciple lean'd on his Masters bosome: but 't is the thiefs and traytors part to go about to rifle it.

3. 'T is surely a modest demand in the behalf of God Almighty, that we should allow him as much priviledge in his World, as every Pesant claims in his Cottage; to be Master there, and dispose of his household as he thinks best: *to say to this man, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to his servant, Do this, and he doth it*, Matth. 8. 9. And if we would afford him this liberty, there would be an immediate end put to all clamor and complaint.

4. We make it our daily prayer that the *will* of God *may be done in earth, as it is in Heaven*,

Heaven, with a ready, swift, and uninterrupted constancy. As't is Gyant-like rebellion to set up our will against his, so is it mad perverseness to set it up against our own; be displeased that our requests are granted, and repine that his, and therewith our will is done. It were indeed not onely good manners, but good policy, to observe the direction of the Heathen, and *follow God*: not prejudge his determinations by ours; but in a modest suspension of our thoughts, *Hearken what the Lord God will say concerning us, for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his Saints that they turn not again*, Psal. 85. 8.

5. Or however upon surprise we may indulge to a passionate affection, and dote upon our illegitimate off-spring, our dearling guilts or follies, as *David* did upon that Child, who was the price of Murder and adultery: yet when the brat is taken from us, when the *Child is dead*, it will become us to do as he did, rise from our sullen posture on the earth, and *worship in the house of the Lord*, 2 Sam. 12. 20. It will behove us, as he sayes in another place, to *lay our hand upon our mouth, because it was his doing*, Psalm 30. 10. and with holy *Job*, Chap. 40. 4. when charg'd with his murmuring, *behold I am vile, what shall I answer? Once have I spoken,*

spoken, but I will not answer: yea twice, but will proceed no further.

6. *Socrates* rightly said of Contentment, opposing it to the riches of fortune and opinion, that 't is the wealth of nature; for it gives every thing that we learnt to want, and really need: but Resignation is the riches of Grace, bestowing all things that a Christian not onely needs, but can desire, even Almighty God himself. He indeed, as the Schole-men teach, is the objective happiness of the Creature; He who is the fountain of being, must be also of blessedness: and though this be onely communicable to us, when we have put off that *flesh which cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, and laid aside that *corruption* which cannot *inherit incorruption*, 1 Cor. 15. yet even in this life, we may make approaches to that blessed state, by Acts of Resignation and denial of our selves. It was the generous saying of *Socrates*, being about to die unto his friend: O *Crito*, since it is the will of God, so let it be: *Anytus* and *Melitus* may kill me, but cannot hurt me. But such a Resignation as 't is infinitly a greater duty to a Christian, so it is also a more firm security. In that case 't is not the *Martyr*, but *Jesus of Nazareth*, who is thus persecuted, and he who attaques him

him will find *'it hard to kick against the pricks*, Act. 9. 5.

7. There could not be a greater instance of the profligate sensuality of the *Israelites*, then that they murmured for want of *leeks and onions*, Numb. 11. 5. when they ate Angels food, and had bread rain'd down from Heaven. 'T is impossible for the soul that is sensible of God Almighties favour, to repine at any earthly pressure: 'The Lord is my shep-'herd, saith *David*, therefore can I lack no-'thing, *Psalm* 23. 1. And thou hast put glad-'ness into my heart, more 'then when their 'Corn, and Wine, and Oil increased, *Psalm* 4. 7. and in passionate rapture he cryes out, *Psalm* 73. 25. 'Whom have I in Hea-'ven but thee: and there is none upon Earth 'that I desire in comparison of thee? my flesh 'and my heart faileth: but God is the strength 'of my heart, and my portion for ever. And likewise *Psalm* 46. 1. 'God is our hope and 'strength, a very present help in trouble. 'Therefore will we not fear, though the earth 'be moved, and though the hills be carried 'into the midst of the Sea. Though the wa-'ters thereof rage and swell, and though the 'mountains shake at the tempest of the same. 'If God be in the midst of us, we shall not be 'removed, he will help us, and that right 'early. Let us therefore possess our selves

of

of this support, and as the Prophet advises, *Isai.* 8. 12. 'Neither fear, nor be afraid, *in* 'any exigence *how great soever*; but be still 'and quiet, and sanctifie the Lord of hosts 'himself, and let him be our fear, and let him be our dread.

FINIS.

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